



*AS  
THE TWIG  
IS  
BENT*

*By  
Susan Chenery*











# AS THE TWIG IS BENT

A Story for Mothers and Teachers

BY

SUSAN CHENERY



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TO MY FATHER



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# AS THE TWIG IS BENT

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## CHAPTER I

### WHY IT WAS WRITTEN

ONE day I found in my sister's weekly letter an invitation more urgent than any yet received. "You must come," she wrote. "If you don't, I shall be positively offended. Brother does not need you this summer, and I am sure the change of air will benefit your rheumatism. Plan to spend your whole vacation with us and get acquainted with your niece and nephew."

I was only too glad to go. Hitherto there had always been some duty to prevent my visiting Helen, but now it seemed as if I might consider my own desires, and I hastened to let her know when to expect

me. In the last days of that school term I looked forward as eagerly as the children to the period of rest, and spent many moments drawing fancy pictures of the home I was so soon to visit. I wondered about the little ones I had never seen, and about my brother-in-law with whom I felt so slightly acquainted; and I also wondered what changes I should find in Helen herself. Changes in appearance were all that I dwelt upon, not those of character or behavior; for in the latter respect I pictured my sister much as she had been in her girlhood. In her letters there was still the same light, merry tone there had always been, and little sign of serious feeling. We could read in them the happiness of an unpretentious, home-centred life, but they had rarely been of a confidential nature, intended as they were for free circulation amongst home-relatives, and somehow we never expected to take Helen seriously. If we did read a word here and there of deeper thought, we

always fancied we saw her smiling face behind, and so continued to think of her as the same careless, light-hearted girl who had left us.

Photographs gave us some conception of the appearance and growth of the children. Five-year-old Margery we knew to be brown-eyed and curly-haired, with a grave, trustful expression, which even in the pictures won our hearts. In the same manner we knew, and did not need the testimony of Helen's letters to convince us, that four-year-old Frank was as jolly a little fellow as we could find anywhere on the round globe. We were informed that his hair and eyes were of a red-brown tint and his complexion fair and freckled.

Mingled with the excitement attending the pleasant anticipations I held of so soon seeing my sister again and of becoming intimately acquainted with her dear ones, it is not strange that there should have been also the hope that my long experience as a

teacher of children would make my presence valuable to her.

The school year came to an end at last, and I went to my sister's home. I saw Helen again. In the place of the merry companion of my girlhood whom I expected to meet, I found an earnest and resourceful woman. I had not been twenty-four hours in her home before I realized that motherhood had taught her more than all my teaching had brought to me; and day after day throughout that long summer I wondered anew at her capability, and treasured carefully in my memory the lessons I learned from watching her methods with the children. With the confidence of instinct she walked calmly through the difficulties which disturb many, and, strong in her mother-love and her devotion to duty, boldly faced the problems which came into her life. What other parents encouraged or allowed had little influence with her. The weakness of permitting what she disapproved of had

no part in Helen's character. Sometimes, also, her firm stand against the introduction of unwise customs among her own children strengthened other parents to take the course they really preferred. Indeed, I could foresee that as her children grew older such questions would be more frequent, and that her influence might in time produce a greater simplicity of life in her community. Yet she felt no superiority, and I had difficulty at first in persuading her to give expression to her views on subjects relating to child-government. Gradually, however, she conversed with more freedom, and when convinced of my sympathy opened the pages of her heart for my perusal.

"But what is best for my children may not be best for others," she would say. "I suppose every mother learns what is best for her own."

Now I had seen too many unwise parents to agree with her in this, and it is because I believe her ideas may be helpful to other

mothers, and because they have been a positive aid to my own work in the schoolroom, that I have tried to record them in this book.

How strangely different from the thoughts I had before I left school were those I took back with me after this vacation! My work seemed now so much more desirable, so ennobling. I was thankful that God had let me live to be back again, to use the new knowledge given to me. Instead of feeling overpowered and discouraged, as so often had been the case on the first day of the school year, by the many new faces arranged symmetrically before my desk, I now looked at them separately and individually, and as my glance wandered from one child to another, I felt that I could love them all, and that this love would help me to accomplish a higher work than that laid out in the text-books. Of course I aimed, as hitherto, to bring the latter up to the required standard, but I no longer felt

anxious about the result. The old routine, which wears into so many a teacher's soul and sets a mark on her by which her profession can be distinguished at a glance, was no longer an unbearable burden to me. It was entwined with new motives and aspirations, which covered its plain monotony, and all the children helped to lift and carry it along. I was younger and happier than I had been for years ; for second only to a mother's did I consider my opportunity in training character, and as a mother's were my days elevated and beautified by children's love.

## CHAPTER II

### TRUTH AND HONOR

My sister had a way of jumping into conversation that often amused me. After sitting for some time in silence at her work, she would come out with a terse remark that would give the first hint of where her thoughts had been roaming. I recall one day when I had been watching one expression after another pass across her face, that she suddenly exclaimed with characteristic energy : —

“I hate lies !”

“Perfectly proper, Helen,” said I, making quite a leap myself *in medias res*. “‘Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord,’ too !”

“Well, I really can see no excuse for a lie.”

“Can’t you? I can. Unwarranted curi-

osity about one's private affairs, for instance. You must surely recall the time that prying Miss Staples asked you if you were engaged before a soul knew of your engagement outside of our family. Do you remember what you said?"

My sister blushed. "Yes, I lied."

"You did, Helen, and it was justifiable, too."

"I'm not sure of that. I think if such an instance should occur now, I could escape with neither confession nor lies."

"Possibly."

"I always did try to speak the truth," continued Helen. "But I believe I dislike lies much more since I have had children. I do so hate to have them untruthful."

I laughed, recalling some of little Frank's latest prevarications.

"Did you have such a siege with Margery?" I asked.

"Margery has had her time, but the motive in her case was a different one.

Frank is ingenious and originates a lie to gain some end, principally to please his stomach. Margery is tempted by fear or shame, because of some naughty thing she wishes to hide."

"Do you mean to say that she still does it?" I asked in surprise, not having observed anything of the kind in the little girl.

"Yes, occasionally; but I can generally get her to be perfectly truthful by not making too much of the offense she is trying to conceal. She understands now that I can endure the knowledge of any sin if she is straightforward in confessing it. It surprises me, however, that it should take so long to teach my children to be truthful."

"Perhaps you are reaping the harvest of your lie to Miss Staples!"

"Don't!" said Helen, shivering. "But really I have tried so constantly never to be severe with Margery when she tells me of wrong-doing that I cannot understand why I must still handle her so carefully. Often I

must coax the truth from her, but I never consciously let her go without getting her to tell me it all."

"Both the children have good imaginations," I said.

"Yes, but they are rarely untruthful from that alone. A few times they have told me of events that I knew had not occurred, and I have said at the end, 'That's a make-believe story, isn't it?' and they admitted it frankly enough."

"Then, too, don't you think children sometimes dream things that seem to them true?"

"Undoubtedly. We must make allowance for that."

"Well," I said, "Margery and Frank trust you implicitly, Helen, and that will certainly make your task easier."

"Yes," said my sister, looking pleased. "I think they do trust me, and they ought to. I have never consciously told either child the whitest kind of a lie. How could I

expect them to be truthful if they ever heard me say what was not true? As it is, I believe, when they are older, they will grow to love truth as much as I do. We often talk about fairies and brownies, and they understand these are creatures of fancy. Perhaps as something more of a reality we have looked upon Santa Claus. For I want my children to have all the fun that others do, and I half believe in the jolly old man myself. But last Christmas Eve Margery said as I undressed her, 'Is Santa Claus really or believing, mamma?' And what could I do? Was I to tell my child a first lie merely to give her a little more fun?"

"I know well enough what you did," I replied.

"Of course. I said, 'It's only believing, Margery, like the brownies.' 'Who gives us the presents, mamma?' Margery asked. 'Oh, papa and mamma and friends,' I answered, 'but I want you to get just as much fun out of it as if it were true. So when

you wake up to-morrow and find your stockings full, I hope you 'll say, just as if it were really so, "Goody, goody! Santa Claus has been here and filled our stockings!"' 'I will, I will,' said Margery, laughing gleefully, and so she did.

"At the same time I asked her not to tell Frank or other children, but 'to keep this a secret with me.'"

"Tell me, Helen," I said, "what do you say if the children ask you questions that you must not answer?"

"I don't lie to them!"

"No; but what do you say?"

"I suppose you refer to questions about their origin. — I say, 'I will tell you when you are old enough to understand.' — If I lived alone with them on a desert island, I could give them a little of the truth now, but it seems to me hardly fair not to respect the reticence of other parents who do not wish their children informed on the subject, and we could not expect little children to

keep such knowledge to themselves. — However, I am watching Margery, and if she continues to keep inviolate our little secret about Santa Claus, I shall tell her another some day, to be kept as carefully.”

That night, as the children were eating their supper in the nursery, their mother and I sitting in an adjoining room, Frank called out : —

“Mamma, Margery jus’ took anuvver spoonful of jam.”

“I did n’t,” said Margery.

“There it is!” said Helen, getting up. Presently I heard her in the nursery asking cheerfully : —

“’Most through supper, children?”

Then the voices rippled on, evidently discussing pleasant subjects. With some curiosity I arose and looked in through the door. Helen stood beside the little table, one hand gently stroking Margery’s head.

“Would you like some more jam, Margery?”

“No, mamma.”

“She took” — began Frank.

“You need n’t tell me,” said his mother. “Margery will, I’m sure. Don’t say anything that is n’t true, darling; it would make me feel so badly. Did you take some jam?”

“Yes, a little.”

“Did you have all you wanted? Would n’t you like some more?”

Then Helen kissed her, saying, “I’m so glad you told me the truth,” and immediately began talking of other things.

My sister’s comment on the matter later was this: —

“Of course the principal thing is to get them to be truthful. Jam is entirely unimportant compared with truth.”

When later we went down to tea, we saw Margery’s doll on a chair in the dining-room. “Don’t let me forget,” said Helen; “I promised to put Rosie in the playhouse before I went to bed.” But neither of us thought of the doll again during the evening.

That night I awoke from my first sleep at the sound of careful footsteps in the hall. I feared one of the children might be ill, and looked out. At that moment my sister was about to enter the nursery.

“Any one sick?” I asked.

“No,” said Helen in a whisper. “I forgot this,” holding up the doll.

“What time is it?”

“About half past two.”

On the way to breakfast Helen told me how she had waked suddenly in the night with the thought of the doll.

“I would n’t lightly break my word to the children. Where an older person might understand an omission for good reasons, a child would lose confidence in you. Children are sharp observers and very critical. Once I hastily threatened to punish Margery if she did a certain wrong thing again. Not long after she repeated the offense; and as I hated to punish her, I looked about for an honorable escape from doing it. She had

hurt Frank. I said if she would tell Frank that she was sorry, and try very hard to be good to him in the future, I would excuse her that time. She did what I asked, and all seemed happily settled; but some time after, when I found occasion to tell the children how carefully one should keep his promises, Margery remarked, 'You broke your word once, did n't you, mamma?' and I learned by a few questions that the little midget had given me a black mark because of my leniency to her that day. That taught me a lesson, and I have been more careful since to promise less, but to keep my word absolutely, unless circumstances beyond my control make that course impossible. In such a case, which rarely happens, I explain the matter fully to the children."

One afternoon, as Helen and I started off on a walk with the little ones, Frank said he had forgotten his whistle. "If you want it, go and get it," said his mother.

"Will you wait for me?"

“Yes, I ’ll wait right here.”

So the little fellow ran back to the house. I have seen children look behind to see if an agreement were kept, but it did not occur to Frank to feel any doubt. It was a sunny spot where we stood, and I suggested that we should cross the street and wait under a tree.

“You go with Margery,” said Helen, “but I will stay here. Frank is so little that he might think I had failed to keep my promise did I budge from the spot.”

Then, humorously, she drew with her parasol a circle about her in the gravel. Frank soon appeared, and I said to him, “You see mamma kept her word and waited for you.”

“Course her did,” said Frank, looking up with surprise at my remark.

I carefully watched my sister through the remainder of my visit and I never heard the slightest prevarication from her, although now that my mind had been specially directed

to the subject of truth-telling and the exact keeping of promises, I noticed with horror the prevalence in other families of the apparent belief that no responsibility is to be attached to lies or breaches of honor with little ones.

I heard mothers say, "If you do that again you can have no candy to-day," and the box of candy would be brought by the delinquent and partaken of in less than five minutes.

"Where is my baby sister?" said a little tot one day to his mother. "I don't know," said she. "Perhaps God has taken her away. You know you struck her." And the little sister was at the time enjoying her customary carriage-ride in the care of the nurse-girl!

"Does it taste bad?" said Margery, drawing back as her mother was about to give her a spoonful of medicine.

"I don't like it," said her mother. "But perhaps you won't mind it. When I have to take it, I swallow it as quickly as I can."

“No matter how desirable the end may seem,” my sister often said, “no lies, no lies ! ”

Helen and I looked down from a window upon the children one day, as they played with little neighbors, and we heard Arthur, who lives next door, and is a year older than Margery, say : “ Let ’s come and ask your mother ; she won’t fool us.” And it seemed to me that out of the mouth of babes Helen’s praise was perfected.

## CHAPTER III

### GROWTH OF UNSELFISHNESS

MARGERY looked at me with big, reproachful eyes. I was puzzled, and felt disturbed without knowing why. When my sister came back I appealed to her. She had left the children with me for the day. Helen smiled when I told her about the fracas.

“You say Frank had taken something of Margery’s?”

“Yes, her picture-blocks.”

“And that she insisted upon his giving them up to her?”

“Yes, she pulled them away and he cried.”

“I am quite sure if I had been at home she would have *asked* him to give them up and would have come to me before snatching them from him.”

“ Oh, she did ask him to give them up, and she asked me to take them away. But Margery did not want the blocks. She was playing with her doll, and I thought she ought to let Frank take them.”

“ So you ” —

“ Yes; when I saw how set she was to take them from him, I told her she must give them up.”

“ Did she refuse ? ”

“ No, but that is what puzzled me. For a moment I thought she would fight me too, but she left the blocks on the table, looked reproachfully at me, and went out of the room.”

“ How has she been since ? very sweet and lamblike ? ”

“ No, ugly as a wolf.”

“ Has Frank been near her ? ”

“ Yes, but she won't look at him.”

“ Then you think the relations between them are a little strained because of this incident ? ”

“Yes, decidedly so. Helen” —

“What is it?” said my sister, looking mischievous.

“I believe — I see my mistake.”

“Yes, I think you were wrong. You see Margery would easily become a very selfish child. I could of course oblige her to give up to Frank, but nothing is gained by this except Frank’s momentary pleasure, and much is lost; for a child that is forced into a renunciation will not become by that act more inclined to unselfishness. I believe it is good for a child to own absolutely his toys and to respect similar rights in others. He not only thus gets acquainted early with the first principles of honesty, but with a little guidance soon finds pleasure in giving from his own to others.

“Of course I can’t tell what might have happened this morning had you sided with Margery instead of Frank. But ordinarily Margery, having received her own, offers it in a few minutes to her brother. As I

have found this frequently the case, I have become convinced that my system is correct. Often, having allowed her to keep her own, I say, ‘Margery, that is yours and you need not give it to Frank if you do not wish to; but I think it would be very nice for you to surprise him in a few minutes when he does n’t expect it;’ or I say to Frank in her hearing, ‘Margery is a dear kind sister, and she lets you take a great many of her things. I should n’t be surprised if in a few minutes she would let you take it. But she need not if she does not wish to.’ This has generally brought about a voluntary act of kindness.”

I listened to Helen with much interest. She went on : —

“I believe Margery has well outgrown her selfishness. Sometimes I even feel inclined to interfere to prevent Frank’s rough handling of her choicest toys, she is so willing to let him take them. If I had not been through it all with Margery I might feel

worried now about him, for I dare say he seems to an outsider, and perhaps to you, a pretty selfish child. But Frank is naturally open-handed, and will get adjusted to his proper position with regard to the world's treasures after awhile. At present he is overwhelmed. Last Christmas completely upset him. Since then he has so cherished his toys that he is not only unwilling that others should take them, but he is almost afraid to play with them himself. I asked him to be careful of them, but he is super, hyper careful, he is miserly !

“Some little boys came to play with him the other day, and he was unwilling to let them touch a single Christmas toy, and in their stead brought out his broken train. I was truly ashamed. When the little friends had become busy with this old plaything, I called Frank into another room and remonstrated with him. ‘I’m afwaid they ’ll bwake ’em,’ he said ; and I could not persuade him to give them up. In this case I felt

obliged to guide him with firmness while I gave him liberty of choice. So I said, 'Well, Frank, those toys are yours and you may do what you like with them. But I shall not let boys come to play with you if you are not going to do all you can to make them happy. And if to have so many playthings makes you selfish, I shall not let you have so many next Christmas. Now you may go to the boys, but think over what I've said.' A little later he came to my door and said, 'Come and look at Harold and Jack, and see what they're doing.' I went to the nursery and found one boy tightening the Christmas drum and the other playing with the coach. 'Don't they look happy?' whispered Frank. 'Yes. Who made them so happy?' 'I did,' he said, with beaming face. I think he has not been quite so close-fisted since, and I hope for a decided change soon."

My sister's children were fast becoming very dear to me, and so it might be that I

looked at their faults through the larger end of the telescope of criticism. It may have been on this account that I had not up to this time observed the selfishness that Helen mentioned in connection with Frank. Reflection, however, brought to mind his particular attachment to his chair.

Soon after I had arrived at my sister's I bought Margery and Frank each a little wooden chair like those used in kindergartens. Simple as the gift was, it gave the children much pleasure. The first night after these chairs had been added to the nursery furniture I went as usual to kiss the little ones good-night. As Frank's chair was conveniently near his bed and strong enough to hold me, I sat on it for a moment to talk with him ; but he twisted nervously about and pushed at me with his feet, muttering, " Go 'way." Understanding the trouble, I took another seat. In a few moments his father came in and sitting where I had first, said : " Is n't this a fine

chair, Frank? Why, it holds me!" but the little boy was so evidently uncomfortable that his father soon went over to Margery. I waited with some curiosity to see what would happen on Helen's entrance. To my amusement my sister did just as we had done. Frank was uneasy and soon whispered to his mother, "I don't like to have you sit in my chair." But as Helen got up at once to take another, he repented and said, "*You* may sit in it, but I don't want any one else to." We thought this feeling would soon pass, but it seemed to grow stronger, and Margery complained one day:—

"Mamma, I think Frank is really selfish about his chair. I always let him sit on mine when he wants to, but he won't let me touch his, and now I just wanted to step on it a moment to get my flowers down from the shelf and he won't let me."

"I'll get 'em for you," said Frank.

"No, I want to get 'em myself," said Margery. "But long's you won't let me take yours, I'll bring my own chair over."

This was done, but Helen soon addressed Frank in this way :—

“ How strange, Frank, that you don’t let your own sister use your chair ! I have a chair downstairs that papa calls mine, and I generally use it in the evening when we are alone ; but if I want to use papa’s, he is delighted to have me ; and we are both glad to have any one who comes in take either of them. Now if Mrs. Quinn should sit down in your chair [Mrs. Quinn was the washwoman and very fat], you might feel afraid that she would break it ; or if Mike should come up from the garden, you might fear that he would get it dirty. But it is n’t Mrs. Quinn, and it is n’t Mike, that wants to do this, but your own dear sister. It seems to me you ought not to mind about your own family. When you get a little bigger I think you will be glad to let any one who comes here sit in your chair.”

These words had more than the desired effect. I am sure Frank would have suf-

ferred much before even his own mother could have forced him to give up in this matter ; but in less than half an hour after this talk, my sister and I overheard an amusing altercation between the two children.

“ I want you to take it,” said Frank.

“ But I don’t want to,” said Margery.

“ Here ’t is, anyway.”

“ Well, I don’t want it. I’m sitting in my own chair. Mamma, Frank pushed me on to the floor.”

We both laughed, and Helen went to harmonize the new conditions. She persuaded Margery to sit for a minute in Frank’s chair, and peace was restored.

Some weeks after this an Armenian peddler with a little girl stopped at the house to persuade the cook to buy something. Helen happened into the kitchen with Frank while they were there, and he looked at the strangers with considerable curiosity. The little girl stood near her mother, to whom she

occasionally said something in their own language. After watching them intently for a while, Frank ran out of the room. His mother had hardly missed him when she heard the thump, thump, of something coming down the back stairs, and in he marched, dragging his chair behind him. He had brought it from the nursery to the kitchen that the little girl might sit in it !

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCERNING OBEDIENCE

“MARGERY, will you please go down stairs and get me a glass of water?”

“Oh, mamma! I’ve just got my dolly all ready for a bath.”

“All right!” said Helen pleasantly, “I’ll get it myself.”

I searched my sister’s face in vain for a suggestion of sarcasm, and not approving of her placidity, said to the child, —

“I’m surprised, Margery, that you would n’t do that for your dear mother.”

“I do lots of things,” was her reply.

“Yes, you do, darling,” said her mother. “Auntie has n’t been here long enough to see how helpful you are.”

“You see,” said Helen, turning to me, — “I draw a decided line between commands

and requests. If I tell Margery to do a thing, I expect her to do it. If I ask a favor of her, she should in my opinion have the privilege of refusing. She rarely does refuse, as you will have many opportunities of seeing. It is easy to ask too much of these willing little hands and feet. By turning their help into a burden I could make the children ungracious."

"Then you do believe in obedience?" I asked.

"Most certainly. I am sufficiently old-fashioned to think it does not hurt a child to mind. He thus learns to respect rightful authority. Acts of obedience to proper and recognized authority prepare the child for his later life. There will always be something for him to obey. It is not easy for him to give up his own will, even for the sake of right; but if this is expected of him in childhood, he is prepared to recognize the importance of right all through his life. The child that begins by obeying a

good and conscientious parent will naturally be better prepared to obey his own conscience in later years, — and to have a more correct conscience, — and he will be a better, because a law-abiding citizen.

“The proper time for unreasoning obedience is at the beginning of the child’s life. In this period it is the child’s safeguard. Therefore it should be prompt, without question or explanation of the reasonableness of the command. The child should be taught to trust to his parents’ judgment in all matters. If explanations are to be given, let them come after obedience, I say, not before. We need not fear Casabiancan experiences! For one such illustration of evil resulting from literal obedience, we have hundreds of life saved through the same cause.

“One reason only do I allow my children: This is the right thing to do; we must do the right.”

I here recalled two of the mottoes on the

nursery walls : “ Do right and fear nothing ; ” and this from the brownies, —

“ Do only what is right,  
And keep your heart light.”

But Helen was talking : —

“ Parents should use consideration in their commands. If a child is absorbed in an occupation, the mother might well think twice before she asks him to leave it to get her a glass of water. Should he not hear her voice at once, this is a good sign, not a bad one. The quality of attention to the work on hand, that concentration which forgets all outside distractions, is a most desirable trait and should be encouraged.

“ As the child grows older the commands should be fewer ; but the parents’ right to obedience should have been settled long before, and, when the occasion calls for it, should be unquestionable. As the child matures he can become more and more a companion to his parents, to either or to

both of them, and that condition of perfect sympathy may be attained where obedience will not be required; for where wishes are respected, commands are not needed. But as long as he is a minor, or dependent on his parents for his support, his position demands of him that deference to his parents that became him in childhood; his dependence makes this suitable. If he cannot submit to it, he should alter his position; then only can he assert his independence.

“Where the child has not been trained to respect and defer to his parents’ wishes, we often see the anomalous situation of a young man or a young woman, actually dependent on the father for each day’s supply of food and clothing, openly disrespectful and often scorning the father’s simplest wishes. The domestic training in such instances may have developed beautiful qualities in the parents (!), gentleness, sweetness, and submission; but it has been a failure with respect to the children.

“Yes, my belief is that a child’s character becomes stronger by submission to proper authority, and that it is better for him to be required to renounce a wrong act as a matter of obedience than to be forcibly detained from continuing it.”

I looked up, laughing.

“Did you think, Helen, you were on the lecture-platform? I am not an opponent. I agree with you perfectly.”

My sister blushed, but before she could reply we had an interruption, and pat came Frank with a large volume in his arms. Helen said quickly, “Frank, that is one of papa’s nice books; go and put it in the other room.”

He did not move.

“Go at once and put the book away,” she repeated.

The boy looked at his mother, then down at the book.

“I don’t want to.”

“That does not make any difference.

You must put it away. Oh, dear! Shall I have to punish?"

"Shut your eyes, mamma," said Margery, "and p'r'aps he'll surprise you."

"Oh, I hope so," said Helen, following the little girl's suggestion.

Frank looked at his mother a moment, then turned around and ran out of the room with the book. Helen sat with her eyes closed till he came back, calling, "Open, mamma, open."

"Come here to me, my dear boy," said she, smiling into his merry face. "I'm so glad you did the right thing! I do hate to punish!"

"That was a happy thought of Margery's," said I, after the children had left us. "Was it original with her?"

"No," said my sister. "I was forced into inventing it when she was younger. If she got into an obstinate mood, we had terrible times. Even when she repented of her stand she could not bear to give in.

The first time I tried this I remember so well. We were both quite worn out with the struggle. I did not wish to 'break her will!' Such language is preposterous. She was persisting in wrong-doing that involved another's rights. I wished her to renounce the wrong. Perhaps if I had realized in advance the child's mood, I might have handled her in a different way; but it came out all right in the end. 'Margery,' I said, 'I'm going to shut my eyes, and I hope my little girl will surprise me by doing the right thing.' She did not jump that time, I assure you, to do what I asked! I seemed to feel her eyes burning into my face as she sat and meditated as to whether she would take the opportunity of yielding gracefully. Then I heard a rustle and I knew she had chosen obedience. Since then I have often found this method a useful one. I don't always resort to it, however; it might lose its virtue with too frequent airing."

"How do you punish the children?" I asked.

“Generally by depriving them of some privilege, but never of anything absolutely promised.”

“Do you believe in corporal punishment?”

“Oh, dear! I don’t know! Not if anything else will do. If all girls are like Margery, I should say, never for girls. I punished her once on her hand and I shall never do it again. I believe if I had kept at it all day she would not have yielded to me. Where an obstinate spirit of rebellion is aroused it cannot be right. Frank is so different. I asked him the other day which he preferred, to be spanked or sent to bed, and he chose the spanking! I thought he made a wise choice.

“One thing I am careful about is to have the children understand how it hurts me to be obliged to resort to any form of punishment, and all the jokes on this subject in the funny columns will not make the act of punishing anything else than painful to

a mother. The children often after repentance say, 'Poor mamma! We're so sorry you had to punish us!'"

Just then Margery and Frank ran up to their mother with some request, and after replying to them, she said:—

"Frank, tell auntie whom you must mind."

"Papa and mamma, and the teacher when I go to school."

"You forgot God," said Margery.

"Yes," said Helen, "these you must mind, — papa and mamma, the teacher, and above all, God."

"Somebody else," said Frank. "The policeman."

My sister looked at me, surprised. "He is right," said she. "To think of the number of times I have talked with them about this, and that I should leave out obedience to the law!

"I don't believe in too many masters. It is, I think, a mistake to require children

to obey servants, or older brothers and sisters, except on special occasions when the parental authority may be vested in these."

When it was time for regular occupations Helen could not brook delay. Scenes like the following occurred sometimes:—

"Come, children, time to get ready for dinner. Go to Mary. Oh, dear! You don't mind like soldiers! Come here and let's have our drill. Now, right about face, forward, march!"

This was fun, and the children put their shoulders back and marched as they had been taught—straight ahead until they reached a wall.

"Right about face!"

Around they wheeled. Here was precision and no delay.

"Forward, march!"

Back they came to their mother.

"Salute!"

Right hands came up to the side of the head, straight out, and down to the side with a flap.

“Right about face!”

Around they wheeled again.

“Forward march — through the door to the bathroom!”

Off went the children to their duty.

This always pleased me, and I determined to try it in the schoolroom.

## CHAPTER V

### CULTURE OF THE CHILD'S LOVE

"SOME day I am going to invent a work-basket on the principle of those weighted toys that are sure to right themselves no matter how they are tossed about!"

"Is your basket upset again?" I asked, amused.

"It is," said Helen solemnly. "Now there is nothing for it but to get down on my knees and pick up every refractory spool."

"If my rheumatism did n't chain me I'd gladly do it for you," said I.

Just then Margery appeared in the doorway.

"I wish there were some brownies about," said my sister.

"You know, mamma," said Margery, "the brownies never work when there are people around."

"That's so," said Helen, "but I wonder, if the people should go to sleep or shut their eyes, if the brownies would n't help them."

"I should n't wonder," said Margery.

At this hint we turned into sleeping images, and let the little girl perform her act of kindness and fun.

"Why, the brownies must have been here!" said Helen when on hearing the soft footsteps pass out of the room, we opened our eyes.

"Very nice brownies indeed!" said I, loud enough to be heard from the hall.

Helen was making a pretty dress for Margery.

"It is such a pleasure to work for one's children," she remarked, "that I might easily forget to teach mine to do for me if I had not seen too many illustrations of filial ingratitude. How often it happens that parents who have slaved for their children are absolutely disregarded and neglected when old, or are expected to keep on slaving

till they die ! The remedy for this condition is, in my opinion, in the line of prevention, and consists in bringing up the children, even from babyhood, to do for their parents, and to expect to do more when older. I have talked with mine about this. I have told them that some day I shall not be able to work for them, that a time may come when I shall not be able to walk or see well, and I asked them, ‘ Who will take care of me then ? ’ Both children threw their arms about me, saying, ‘ I will. ’ I told them that I often get tired now, working in one way or another, and that they could help me by saving my steps, or by loving me ; that perhaps, if they help me, I should not get old quite so soon. Since then I notice that they look out for me in many ways, and their love does certainly help me through trying hours. If I lie down with a headache they come in softly, kiss me, or darken the room, and I often leave some small duties unperformed that they may acquire the habit of sparing me unnecessary labor.

“I am also anxious that the children should realize the relationship between themselves. For this reason I never compare one child with the other, and I make light of any grievance between them. ‘It is easy to forgive our own,’ I say to the hurt or grieved child, and a gentle word to the offender generally makes him ashamed of his conduct. If I punished him the angry feelings on both sides would be aggravated. You remember father used to say to Hal and Robert, ‘If you quarrel I’ll punish you both.’ For unmanageable boys that is n’t a bad rule. It promotes community of sorrow and hence of sympathy!” and Helen laughed.

“Now don’t imagine that because of these preparations I can feel sure of a loved and comfortable old age myself, or of a state of loving sympathy between Margery and Frank in mature years. I do not know what evil influences may touch and modify my children’s characters in later life; but these first years of theirs I hold, and with God’s help

I am going to make the best of them. Don't you think it stands to reason that if children are trained from their earliest recollections to be considerate of the other members of the family, they will be more likely to be so through life?"

"Indeed it does, Helen," said I. "But you are unfortunate in not having a grandparent near by for your little ones to visit and care for."

"Yes, I often realize that. Just think! Father and mother died before either of the children was born. I feel as if Margery and Frank had missed a blessing in not having been looked upon by them. Then Edward's parents are so far away that they are scarcely more than a name to the children. My little ones miss what ought to be one of the most elevating and refining influences of a child's life."

Just here I felt impelled to call my sister's attention to a condition which I had noticed in her home, and which seemed to me the

weak part of the character-structure she was building. It required all my courage to put a question which was sure to wound, however faithfully intended.

“Are you teaching the children to do for their father as well as for you?”

During several moments there was no reply. I could not lift my eyes from the work in my hands. When Helen spoke, I perceived by her voice that she was deeply moved.

“God forgive me!” she said.

“Helen,” I cried, startled myself at her emotion, “it is n’t too late.”

“No, but I’m so ashamed! You see, Edward is at home so little when the children are awake and takes so little notice of them then, that he cannot get a hold on their affections without help from me. On Sundays they disturb him, on other days he gives them a cent now and then, and occasionally comes up and kisses them good-night. When Margery was born, I used to think of train-

ing her to get papa's slippers and of doing other little things for him. But those intentions have been completely forgotten. May I be forgiven ! ”

“ I have often noticed this, Helen,” said I, “ in other homes. Do not feel so badly. The father is often kept to one side, unless he is especially assertive and demonstrative. Even when held in remembrance, it is often merely as the instrument of discipline. On the other hand, if the mother is neglectful of her children, you will generally find the father attentive to them.”

“ Well, there 'll be a change in this house from to-day ! ” said my sister earnestly.

“ Edward is also to blame. He ought to make more of the children,” I ventured.

“ It is n't necessary,” said Helen. “ The fault is my own and I recognize it. To keep their love for him alive is disgracefully easy. I have only to see that they think about him and do for him as well as for their selfish mother. Oh, I 'll fix it, now that my atten-

tion is directed to it. I am ashamed that you should have to teach me this, but I am grateful for your frankness."

There was no halfway work about Helen. Margery was helped to make a simple pudding "for dear papa" that very afternoon, and to Frank it was suggested that the same parent might like to see one of his funny pictures.

As for myself, I had the happiness of knowing that old maid meddlers can sometimes do a good work, and I thanked the Lord that He had given me courage to speak the words He had put in my mouth.

## CHAPTER VI

### PARENTAL SYMPATHY

THE next day, as we sat again with our needlework, there was a noise of feet stumbling up the stairs, and in rushed Frank to throw himself against his mother with tears and pent-up moans. For a minute Helen smoothed his hair and let him cry. Then he was able to tell the cause of his childish grief. Not till the storm had passed and the sun was about to shine again in the clear eyes did his mother say quietly : —

“We must try to be brave. I suppose when we get a little bigger we won’t cry when we’re hurt.”

“I dess not,” whispered Frank, and he went out trying to whistle.

“This brings up another aspect of the subject we were talking about yesterday,”

said I. "Then we were considering the child's duty toward the parent. You said little, Helen, of the parent's duty to the child."

My sister looked up from her sewing.

"In the way of sympathy?"

"Yes. I was pleased to see you comfort Frank before you urged him to be brave."

"I suppose many would censure me for that. I fancy the proper thing for me to say would be, 'For shame, Frank, to cry for so little a thing!'"

"And then perhaps he would not come to you the next time he was hurt."

"No, he would go to Mary, or struggle through the pain by himself. And I want him to come to me. I want him to feel sure of my sympathy in everything that concerns him. Then we can aim together at courage and every other good thing. But one has to be so careful not to startle a child. Little wild things! They remind me of the sparrows that come so boldly near us, yet fly at the movement of a finger.

“Before Margery was three she gave me her first confidence. We had taken a drive that day with a strange and nervous horse. Edward was with us, but I was not very strong and too plainly showed my fear. Margery sat between us and slipped back while the horse was prancing. As soon as I could control myself, I pulled her out and tried to occupy her attention with objects on the road. I had thought she might have been frightened, but although she was unusually quiet, I saw no signs of fear. That night when she went to bed, I said, ‘Did n’t we have a nice ride to-day?’ and she replied, ‘I did n’t like it when the horse jumped. Mamma, I want to whisper something: *I cried in there in the dark!*’ ‘Did you, darling?’ I said, comprehending that she referred to the time when she was behind us in the carriage. ‘No, I did n’t!’ she exclaimed, already ashamed of giving utterance to her inmost sentiments. I refrained from further reference to the subject, but treasured this voluntary confidence.”

“That ‘No, I did n’t’ was not the truth, Helen. Did you say anything to her about it?”

“Oh, no! In the first place, you must remember, she was very little at the time; then she had taken a big step in opening that secret chamber of her heart, and the important part for me just then was to keep her from regretting it. Much as I love truth, it did n’t enter my head to give her a lesson on that subject then. I am sure, recalling it, that it was a time *not* to speak.

“In this same epoch she made her first unsolicited confession of wrong-doing, and I received it without showing the special interest I felt, being anxious not to startle my timid nestling. Cranberry time had been long past when she said to me, ‘Once, mamma, I saw some red things in a pan on the kitchen table and I took some upstairs.’ ‘What for?’ said I. ‘To eat ’em. I thought you would n’t let me have ’em!’ It was the first glimpse of deception in my

little girl and would have saddened me, had I not been so pleased with the confidence indicated in the confession. I did not frighten her with reproof. I should have opportunities enough to direct her to the right. I simply asked, 'Did you eat them?' And she replied, 'No, I did n't like 'em. I threw 'em away.' "

"Yes," said I, "Margery seems a very shy and reticent child, but Frank is not, is he?"

"Frank is easily startled too if he fears he has said too much. Young as he is, he seems ashamed of good impulses put into action for the first time. I think most children must be like him. When he went with me into Boston, the other day, he became quite drawn to one of the conductors of an electric car, and even offered him a treasured bit of candy. As the man thanked him, Frank looked quickly at me, as if ashamed that I should have seen what had occurred. I wondered why the child

should distrust my sympathy, and took pains to pat his hand and whisper, 'I guess he was glad to get it!'

"Yes, children are shy little things. Who holds a child's love and confidence owns something beyond price. But to become really intimate with a child and be a confidant in his woes and happiness, we must get off our pedestals of dignity. We can learn a lesson from the babies, who are afraid of grown people, yet play fearlessly with other children, even when these are strangers. If you wish to conquer a strange baby, the quickest way is to reduce your dimensions, get down on the floor, and thus make yourself appear at least as nearly as possible of his height. Something of this we can apply to the treatment of our own children. They are sufficiently aware of our bigness, our age, and the respect due to us. If we wish to have their confidence, we must show them we have not forgotten what it was to be little, and even that we

were n't perfect then, although in their ignorance they may so consider us now.

“ You know what good friends Emily Thorne and her mother are ; they seem more like devoted sisters. I asked Mrs. Thorne once how she had managed, and she talked on the subject with the greatest frankness. This is what she said : ‘ I always felt an interest in Emily’s affairs, and showed it. Then I did n’t put myself on an altar and ask Emily to worship me. I preferred that she should look on me as a companion. She used to tell me everything. One evening when she was about twelve, on her return from a neighbor’s, I went as usual to her room for a quiet chat. ‘ Oh, mother,’ she said, ‘ I’ve done something awfully silly ! I know you will think it the silliest thing in the world ! ’ ‘ What is it ? ’ I asked. ‘ I used to do silly things sometimes when I was younger.’ ‘ Oh, I’m really ashamed to tell you — Charlie kissed me at the door and I kissed him ! ’ ‘ Well,

Emily Thorne, that was silly and no mistake! But I shall have to tell you that I did just the same thing once when I was a little girl. My mother told me not to do it again, and I don't want you to. Keep your kisses for papa and me.'” Thus with sympathy mingled with her bit of advice Mrs. Thorne cherished the child's confidence, instead of discouraging her by a too prompt and decided disapproval.

“As children will do unwise things, how much better it is for their parents to know about them! Of course we all want our little saplings to be stronger and finer than we are, but we can hardly expect them to be much better. They cannot flourish like a green bay-tree if they partake of the nature of a juniper. But the young tree may grow into one more perfect than the parent from which it came. We may expect our children to be tempted in just the ways we have been, and that they will have many of our follies and weaknesses. But if they

will only confide these to us, they can have the strength derived from our experiences to help them avoid evil. They must be sure of our love, and that in spite of any wrongdoing. Having gained their confidence, we must keep it. We must not betray their little secrets, even if they seem insignificant. We must be their best, their closest friends."

We stitched away in silence for a while. I was recalling an incident of the previous day.

Seeing Frank step on a toad, I had reproved him from the window. "Stop, Frank, you naughty boy," I said, with an aunt's freedom of speech. "Take your foot off that toad." Just then Helen came up behind me and put a hand over my mouth. Then she looked out of the window and exclaiming, "Oh, the poor little toad!" ran quickly out of doors. I watched her from the window. The toad was uninjured and soon hopped off into the grass. Helen stood beside Frank, looking at it.

“That was not a kind thing to do to the little toad, was it?”

“No, mamma.”

“I hope you won’t do it again.”

“No, mamma.”

Then she kissed him and hurried back to me.

“I will tell you frankly,” she said on entering, “I did not like to hear you call Frank naughty. If he should get the belief that he is a naughty child, perhaps he would not be a good one! If he should behave very badly I might speak of his *acts* as naughty, but I would not call *him* so. It is not fair to judge a child by each separate act. Often he experiments with himself, uses an objectionable word perhaps, or performs a questionable deed, but is easily persuaded to lay them by. The motive is everything, and only God Himself (unless it is the mother) knows the child’s motives.

“We must keep his aims high, not lower them by discouragement. We must not

make crimes of slight offenses. When we see the bad, let us not forget the good. Let us expect good things from him and show him that we do. Surely expressed opinions help to form character. I try to encourage all the good and help the children to forget their naughty acts. When atonement is necessary it is better, it seems to me, to wait until the naughty mood has passed before requiring it. Of what use is it to force sullen, angry children to beg one's pardon? If we wait till they feel happier, they are really sorry and willing enough to to say so. Thus we can foster self-respect, not kill it."

"There's good common sense in that, Helen," said I. "It depresses me to this day to know that others are dissatisfied with me."

"What do you think," said I a moment later. "Is love blind?"

"Blind! Far from it! Love has wonderful eyes. Love has even second sight. Do

I not know when my children appear well ?  
Do I not know as certainly when they are  
*not* at their best ? All can see evil plainly.  
The eyes of Love can see the good which is  
hidden from the common sight. This is  
why the true mother can find excuses for  
her child's wrong conduct, and this is what  
gives her her power of influence. The too  
visible evil does not frighten her, for she  
can see the hidden good. She knows the  
foundation she has to build upon. How  
many great men have owed their success to  
the penetrating love of a mother or a sister,  
who could see below the surface faults and  
unattractiveness the foundation of talents  
and goodness ! ”

## CHAPTER VII

### THRIFT

ONE day my sister went into the nursery and found her little boy hard at work pulling a ball to pieces.

“Why, Frank!”

“It’s mine, mamma.”

“Yes, I know it,” she replied, and left him, thinking the destroyed plaything would bring its own lesson; but the next day he broke apart a tin horse and cart, and the next he made so much noise pounding his cast-iron locomotive that she discovered him before he had done any damage to it.

“Frank, what has got into you!” she exclaimed.

“Nussin,” he replied, still pounding.

“Stop, Frank; I can’t let you spoil that engine.”

“It’s mine.”

“Oh, yes, I know that. But why do you wish to break it, your lovely engine?”

“I don’t want it any more.”

“But you will. When winter comes and you play in the house you will want it.”

“I want to break it up.”

“I can’t let you.”

“But it’s mine.”

“Yes, the engine belongs to you, but you belong to me, and I mustn’t let you do it.”

“Why?”

“Because it’s wasteful.”

“What’s that?”

“It’s throwing away things good for something. That engine cost money. Somebody worked to get the money that paid for it. If you break the engine you waste that good money that somebody worked for.”

Helen now continued in an extremely serious tone of voice :

“For willful waste makes woeful want,  
And you might live to say,

Oh, how I wish I had that — engine —  
That once I threw away.”

Which impressed Frank more, the meaning of the words or his mother’s manner, we could not know. An impression was certainly made. He looked at the engine a minute, then lifted it carefully and laid it beside its companion cars in the box, and the flood of destruction that had threatened the nursery was stayed.

“I don’t like to see children wasteful,” said Helen a short time after this; “but it seems to me that they breathe extravagance in this country of easily acquired fortunes. Don’t you think so?”

“Yes, I do indeed.”

“But how can they escape this influence? I find it hard to resist myself. A bargain advertisement always entices me. If I have money in my pocket, I am obliged to pull myself by a tempting window. In fact I don’t always go by!”

I laughed.

"Still, Helen, you save a good many things that others would throw away."

"Now you are naughty! You are thinking of my attic with its useless savings, things one can't give away and yet that wheedle me into believing they will be of use some day."

"You have n't kept any seven years yet, Helen."

"I shan't get a chance to. Edward can't bear these accumulations, so every two or three years he goes over the attic, throwing out of the window everything that can go through it, and telling Mike to make way with the rest. He gets perfectly reckless and discards things he is sure to want later. At such times I sit downstairs and disapprove, but feel no responsibility in the matter. Edward is worse than I am in spending money, too. It's a case of pot and kettle, I know, but while both are equally black, one may be a little bigger. Edward has always been used to nice things and he will get them

if he has the ready money, even if we suffer for it later on. I believe in having a surplus. Edward says his life insurance is his savings bank. But there should be something laid by for his own rainy day and for the time when he will feel too old to work. If we were an uncommon case, I should consider that persons so imprudent should have a guardian appointed ! But I know there are only too many that live as we do. All have the feeling that something better will come, or that we shall keep on indefinitely no worse than we are, that some day we may invent something indispensable to human comfort, or that copper mines or oil wells may be discovered in our gardens !”

“ Or that you may find yourselves heirs to a dukedom ! ” said I. “ Now, unfortunately, I have no such hopes, and must prosaically put in the bank a part of my salary every year.”

“ Well, it ’s wise. You may yet have us all to support ! ”

“But, Helen, to speak seriously, why don’t you lay up something yourself, little by little?”

“Oh, I do, I’m always doing it; but some charity or necessity comes along and gobbles it up. However, I do not wish the children to grow up so foolish, though how I am to prevent it is just what puzzles me at present. Have you noticed how often they wish to spend a cent for candy?”

“Yes, but what can you do? Every child in the neighborhood does the same.”

“That’s where the trouble lies; but I think I shall soon have a talk with Margery and Frank and persuade them to give up the habit. It’s only a recent one. They will feel happier than to be forbidden to spend their money, especially when, as you say, the neighbor children are all doing it.”

One bedtime soon after this my sister and her children had a serious talk about money, how much it could do and how big it could grow little by little. Helen spoke strongly

against spending pennies for mere personal gratification.

“The money melts away when you do that, and you have no after pleasure from it. If any candy comes to you, why, eat it and be glad, but do not spend your pennies for it. Your money comes little by little and it can go in just the same way. It wouldn’t be a bad idea for each of you to have two savings banks, the one you now have with the lock for Christmas and other gifts and things you need to buy, and another one never to be meddled with till full.”

“What would we do with it when it’s full?”

“You could empty it into a bigger one.”

Evidently here Helen had reference to the city savings institutions.

“What will we do with the money when we have a lot?” asked Margery.

“Perhaps you would buy a house.”

“Oh, yes.”

“I shall keep mine to buy you a cow, mamma,” said Frank.

The next day to our amusement Margery and Frank brought upstairs with noticeable difficulty a large wooden box.

“ This would do for our big savings bank, would n’t it, mamma, if you just cut a hole in the top to put the money through ? ”

“ Which one is to have this ? ” asked Helen, avoiding my eyes.

“ We thought it would do for both of us, ” said Margery.

“ Why, yes, it ’s big enough. Well, you put it down and I ’ll ask papa about it to-night. ”

Noticing the disappointed faces I said, “ If you can get me a knife I could make the hole. ”

“ But where shall we keep so big a box ? ” said Helen, and without hurting their enthusiasm by disapproval, she was able to satisfy them with one much smaller. It was, in fact, a starch box, in which I cut the hole for the pennies and afterwards glued the cover down. Margery and Frank took great plea-

sure in transferring to it the brown cents of their smaller banks, and in course of time it became the receptacle of all the small pieces which came to them. Those of more value were generally kept in the original banks. One day Margery wished to know if she might glue the box to the closet shelf where it was kept, and Helen allowed the child to do it.

“It’s so we won’t take it down and shake it and lose the money out,” said Margery.

I was surprised to note how well this simple device worked. The children seemed to lose all desire of spending their pennies. When a cent was received it was deposited in the starch-box bank, and this being at other times out of sight was out of mind.

Besides the advantages the bigger bank brought in the development of thrift, it lessened the amount of candy eating, which appeared to me an evil not much smaller than wastefulness. As our children did not have pennies to spend, they did not accompany

other children who were enriching the proprietors of the little store, and Margery and Frank were always so generous with whatever cookies and apples they took out with them that they could never be accused of meanness by their little playmates.

When Margery showed her papa the immovable savings bank, he drew in his breath with a whistle and shook his head.

“Don’t you like it?” she asked anxiously.

“Tremendously,” he answered, counting into her hand what pennies he happened to have in his pocket.

In the evening he busied himself over a large cigar box, first cutting an oblong slit in the cover.

“Oh, I would n’t, Ned,” said my sister. “Margery thinks her present one is beautiful. I’m afraid it will hurt her feelings to offer her that.”

“I shan’t,” said Edward. “This is for me!”

Helen laughed. “You’ll break it up the first time you want some change.”

“I shall do no such thing. I shall not break it till I can get no more in.”

“Are you going to put ‘brown cents’ in yours?” Helen asked.

“Possibly. Some white ones too, I think.”

This box was soon finished. Edward kept it downstairs in a drawer, and I often saw him put in money and occasionally saw my sister do the same.

One pleasant evening after the children had gone to bed, Edward, Helen, and I were sitting on the veranda. After a while Edward dropped his paper and leaned comfortably back, watching the wreaths of smoke, as he blew them into the air. After observing him a few minutes, Helen said:—

“A nickel for your thoughts, Ned.”

He held out his hand.

“I trade for cash.”

I laughed, and as my sister had no money with her, passed over the desired amount.

“I’ll put it in my savings bank by and by,” said Edward.

"Now go on," said Helen.

"I was thinking how much money goes up in smoke."

"Is that all? I've often thought that."

"Well, I didn't make any pretense to originality of ideas, neither did I misrepresent the value of my wares. You put your own price on a sealed package. But there's an awful amount of money burned up and no mistake! I was just thinking that smoking ought to be confined to the wealthy."

Edward suddenly sat upright.

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do: I'm going to limit myself to one cigar a day for a month, and if I don't become an angel and with the angels stand before the expiration of that period, I may decide to continue longer on the same road."

"You frighten me, Ned; you're getting so good," said my sister. "What can I do to make myself a better half?"

"Now, sis, no nonsense!" said her husband, and he looked at her in so tender a

way that I thought it better to walk down among the shrubs for awhile.

I hoped from my heart that the movement thus started would lead them further in so desirable a direction, and I believe it did result finally in pruning many petty extravagances.

In the school I knew no better system than the savings stamp-books, in which I had already tried to interest the children, although the knowledge of the general extravagance common in their homes made me almost hopeless of any permanent good result. Happy may that teacher be who realizes that she has started a child in the right direction when the influences of the child's home are not for good. But when both parents and teacher have the same aims, what may not be expected from their united efforts! In these days of obedient parents, children become self-important. Their opinions are consulted in matters which the parents alone should decide, their opinions

are allowed to be influential, and naturally enough their opinions seem to them very valuable. Parents criticise the teachers before the children, and of course children criticise their teachers. It must be that much of the teacher's opportunity of influence is lost. Among the agencies that have turned many successful men and women from foolish habits of reading or conduct when they were young may be recorded the advice of some person who superintended their studies and saw the opportunity to give a needed bit of counsel. How often with the coming generation, and even the present one, will the word in season be barren of results, because the feeling of respect for the teacher has largely passed away !

The more reason for me, I considered, as these thoughts passed through my brain, that I should use what power I can muster with the children before they grow old enough to comprehend fully the home criticisms on my methods of work.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TEMPER

THE children had gone out, and Helen remarked:—

“Now we can tackle that old dress of mine.” But just then we heard one of them returning. It was Frank. He went into the nursery, pulled open drawers and tossed things about with energy, as was plain from the sounds. Then he called.

“Mamma, — mamma.”

“Yes.”

“Where’s my sand-cup?”

“I don’t know, Frank. Isn’t it in the box?”

“No, it is n’t, and I want it.”

“I’ll see if I can find it.”

Helen’s search was also in vain.

“I want it.”

“Ask Mary if she has seen it.”

Frank came back.

“No, she says she has n’t. She swept it up, I know she did !”

“Perhaps you left it somewhere, Frank.”

“No, I did n’t, ’n I want it. I want it now.”

“There’s a cracked cup in the kitchen. Tell Mary mamma says you can have that.”

“I don’t want any cracked cup. I want my own.”

Frank here threw himself on the floor and began to howl,—

“I want my cup, — I want my cup.”

Helen tried to lift him, but he pushed her away and cried the louder, “I want my cup,” at the same time vigorously kicking the floor.

From the other room I could see Helen as she stood looking down at him.

“Frank, I wish you would please be a good boy. I have some work to do and you keep me from it.”

“I want my cup, I want my cup. Stop,

let me be, I don't want my shoes taken off. Let me be."

"I must save your new shoes, Frank. You're wearing the toes out, kicking so."

"I don't want 'em saved. Let me be."

After a struggle his mother had the shoes off. I smiled, thinking there would n't be much kicking after that. Helen shut the nursery-door and came back to me. Then she took the stocking bag, saying: —

"I guess I'll leave the dress till another day."

We heard Frank for a while yelling, "I want my cup" over and over again, then all was quiet. Margery came in to ask for him and found him asleep on the floor. Then Helen took him up and carefully laid him on his bed. Of course when Frank awoke an hour later he was a different child. He came to our door and stood looking at us. Then he walked over to his mother and leaned against her.

"Don't you want to put on your shoes now and go out doors?"

“Ye-es.”

He fetched them and his mother helped put them on. Just then Margery came in.

“Mamma, has Frank been naughty?”

“Shall we tell dear sister all about it?” said Helen.

Frank shook his head.

“I can’t tell you, Margery, unless Frank is willing. Perhaps he will tell you himself by and by.”

Frank gave his mother a grateful kiss. Then the children went out to resume their play in the sand. In the kitchen Frank asked for the cracked cup, but found his own in the laundry. No reference was made to his burst of temper until night-time.

“Mamma, see, I did wear out my shoes some.”

“Yes, and you wore out yourself some too!”

“What’s that?”

“Why, you got tired out crying and screaming.”

“ Did the sleep make me rested again ? ”

“ Yes, but you might have been out in the fresh air all that time.”

“ Oh, yes.”

“ I should like to have you conquer that naughty spirit.”

“ I don’t know what ’s conquering.”

“ Getting the better of it. If you let that naughtiness have its own way, it beats you, but when Temper wants to make a big fuss and you don’t let it, but instead keep pleasant and quiet, you conquer it, you get ahead of it, you beat it.”

“ Why didn’t you punish him, mamma,” said Margery, “ and make him do the right thing ? ”

“ I may have to some day if Temper gets too big for Frank to manage, but I thought he would rather fight it himself and conquer it.”

“ Oh yes, I would, mamma. I want to fight him.”

After the children had settled down for

the night I found Helen standing at the hall window looking out into the darkness. I walked up behind and laid a hand on her shoulder. She turned to include me in the window space and also in her thought.

“I was just wondering if I did not make a serious mistake with Margery in the way I managed her temper.”

“Margery!” said I.

“Yes,” said my sister. “I’m afraid I did the child a wrong. I will tell you about it and see what you think. Margery used to have positively frightful attacks of temper.”

“Margery!”

“Yes. These would often start in a little thing, but they would grow into big storms of passion. Once I actually sent for the doctor, thinking she must be insane. She would crawl on the floor and seize me by the feet or the hem of my dress. It was terrible. We would both of us be perfectly exhausted after one of these attacks. I

became convinced that the greatest kindness I could do her was to prevent the continuation of these passionate outbursts; but my inventive power was put severely to the test in devising a way to do this. I could always see the storm arising, and I would frequently warn her, saying, 'Now, Margery, you are beginning one of those temper times. If you don't stop now it will grow and grow until you can't stop it, and it will end in a bad headache!' But I was always too late to prevent the storm. One day she had just got well started in one of these fits of passion when a new girl, who had been with us only a few days, came upstairs to ask me something. To my surprise Margery instantly stopped groveling and screaming, although she still lay on the floor. When the girl had gone downstairs the child resumed her screams. 'Margery,' said I, 'I want you to go outdoors.' — 'I don't want to go. No! No!' — 'You must.' — 'No, mamma. Please don't make me. Oh, mam-

ma!' — and the child seized my dress again. I walked to the stairs and Margery crawled after me. 'You must go down, Margery.' — 'Now, mamma?' 'Yes, now.' — 'Oh, mamma!' — 'Go at once.' — At last, after further struggles, she was downstairs and out of doors. As I expected, when placed where her cries might be overheard she refrained from screaming, and when allowed later to come in, was quite her usual self. The next time I saw the beginning of one of these attacks I made her go out at once. Since then, to my great surprise, I have never seen any symptoms of temper."

"I don't understand your trouble, Helen. It seems to me that you found the vulnerable spot and conquered the fault through that."

"Yes, that's just it. I wish I had waited for her to conquer it herself. I was just wondering if I had wronged the child."

"Nonsense, Helen."

"Well, I anxiously hope it is not so. Of

late I have thought much of teaching, training, persuading the children to *choose* to do right, as opposed to forcing them to take a moral stand against their will. I do not mean by this to question my right to receive obedience, rather the wisdom of requiring it in a case of this kind. I wonder whether I did wisely to stop Margery, and whether in so doing I may not have injured her strength of character. If I by authority prevent the continuance of an eruption of temper, the child is benefited only as far as the cessation of hostilities, and that of her own excitement, is a benefit to her physically and mentally. I question if there is any moral benefit. But if she can be taught to rule her own spirit, although it may take longer to obtain permanent control, she stands in the position of a conqueror instead of the conquered. She has lost nothing; her powers and her peculiarities are there, but she is master of them. What is temper? Is it not largely made up of a high spirit

joined to nerves and will? Now, these qualities are not bad in themselves. They are part of the desirable outfit of the adult. 'We put bits in the horses' mouths and we turn about their whole body,' but surely that is not the way to train a child. If we wish to make the most of our children, ought we not to teach them to master themselves? Of course, meanwhile, they must gain no advantage over us by screams and self-will; that would be to let them master us. Not one inch of the parent's position should be ceded while waiting for the passionate child to subdue himself. Generally at first he will not stop till quite exhausted, and parley with him at the time is futile; but a faithful delineation of the passionate conduct later on in a quiet moment, when the child is open to gentle influences, may result in resolutions on his part which would gradually develop much strength of character."

"You seem convinced yourself, Helen, and what you say sounds reasonable, but I have

not thought enough about it to give an opinion. I see it is not a question of simple obedience."

"No, not at all. I am not referring to clashes of will between a parent and child."

"Neither do you include fits of passion which may affect another's rights?"

"No ; if Margery is attacked by Frank, it is my duty to prevent her from being hurt by him. I referred to temper as it affects the individual himself when there are no outside considerations."

"Well, I'm inclined to think you are right, but it is n't the way we were brought up, and I don't see but you've turned out pretty well, Helen!"

With that we both laughed and went down to join Edward.

## CHAPTER IX

### HABITS

“MAMMA, have I got to have my hands washed?”

“Let me look at them. Why Frank, where have you been?”

“But have I got to have ’em washed?”

“Certainly. What should you think, auntie, of having those hands near you at table?”

I smiled.

“I don’t want ’em washed. I like to have ’em dirty.”

“Do you really think so, Frank? Run down and put them beside the tablecloth and see how they look.”

The child was glad to have the washing deferred and disappeared at once, followed

by Margery. They soon returned, Margery laughing as she said, —

“ Oh, mamma, they looked as black as a coalman’s ! ”

Frank now had his hands behind him.

“ Would you like to have mamma wash them for you ? ”

“ Ye-es.”

“ Come, then.”

Later Helen took Frank on her lap, and after singing one of his favorites gathered his hands into hers and looked at them.

“ Oh, I love those clean little, pink little hands. I must kiss them. Don’t you think they are nicer than they were before they were washed, Frank ? ”

“ Ye-es.”

“ I think clean hands feel nicer than dirty ones.”

“ I do too, mamma,” said Margery.

“ I do too,” said Frank.

For many days after this Frank showed much interest in keeping his hands clean.

He would wash them himself when the nurse-girl was not by, and would come to his mother, holding them up for the kiss.

“Custom alone without personal interest will not of necessity make permanent habits,” said Helen one day. “We might have Frank wash his hands till he is twenty-one, and if he does not care for the result obtained, he will stop washing them the day he is away from observation. But if he begins now to take pleasure in the result of the washing, he will wish to be clean, even if he is cast by himself on a desert island.”

“I have often wondered,” said I, “at the careless ways of some who were brought up nicely. That would account for it. But how much less hold good habits have than bad ones!”

“Yes,” said my sister. “Everything good leads us upward, and it is always easy to go down hill! But if we become accustomed to the pure air of the higher elevations, perhaps we shall not be content to

stay down in the valleys, and if we do slip back, we shall wish to climb again."

"When you hear of a man hitherto perfectly honorable doing something dishonest, how do you explain it?"

"I do not pretend to explain it. Sometimes I wonder if the man's previous conduct has been based on principle or merely on habits imitated by him because respected by the world in general. It is better, I believe, to have the reason for a good habit understood by children, and to awaken their interest in it. But even so, and with every desire to do what is right, and the habit of years to aid you, have you not yourself sometimes found a thought of evil, opposed to all your previous desires and manner of life, come to you with the force of a temptation? I confess that this has been the case with me, and even when it has lasted but a moment, in that time I have been able to comprehend the power of sin, and what it must be to those poor souls who have never known

moral training, as well as to those who have, and drift away from it. If their thoughts and time be filled with ambition and the thirst for money, they grow into believing that all aids to these ends are permissible. We need to grapple good habits to our characters with hoops of steel."

"How is it, Helen," said I, "don't you ever let any of the children's slips go by without notice?"

"There may be accidents, as Margery's at the table this morning. I always avoid noticing such, unless of an extremely careless kind or too frequent. If a child recognizes his error in neglecting a regular habit, I say little or nothing; but if the habits I am trying to teach are disregarded thoughtlessly, I rarely let the occasion go without a remark; at least I do not intend to. Sometimes I may forget if there is no opportunity to speak at the moment of omission. Common habits relating to manners at the table and elsewhere, to neatness, thoroughness,

courtesy, and proper language must always be enforced, otherwise their opposite bad habits, which are much harder to obliterate, will be formed. While external habits are not so important, of course, as those relating to the moral nature, they should receive continual attention also. The former must be inculcated because they are right, the latter because they are expedient."

My sister had a good system with regard to correct speech and courteous manners, which I mentally commended. I now found myself thinking of this. When the children failed in polite expression, or repeated before their mother undesirable words gathered from the servants or from other children, Helen would quietly say the correct form, or if the error was of a particularly common and obstinate kind, she would say it twice. She did not oblige the children to repeat these corrections, trusting rather to the gradual effect on the ear of her own repetitions. On my giving speech now to these reflections, Helen replied : —

“I don’t like bad grammar, and I stamp on ‘ain’t’ every time it appears ; but some quaint little incorrectnesses of speech I let alone. Margery says, ‘I strang the beads’ — ‘I brang the water’ — ‘They have dranken it all up’ — ‘I have wroten the letter ;’ and looking upon these as childicisms and not vulgarities, I really like to hear them. It seems to me a pity, however, to teach children bad grammar through nursery rhymes. To my mind antiquity should give way to purity of speech. This is the way we say ‘Hickory, dickory, dock’ in this family : —

“ ‘Hickory, dickory, dock !  
The mouse ran up the clock.  
The clock struck one,  
*And he ran down.*  
Hickory, dickory, dock !’

“ ‘Tom, Tom, the Piper’s Son’ has three gross errors, but can be altered into this : —

“ ‘Tom, Tom, the piper’s son,  
Stole a pig and away did run.  
For this they had bad Tom to beat,  
And Tom ran crying down the street.’ ”

“Now, really,” said I, “do you think that has the charm of ‘The pig was eat and Tom was beat’? That has a swing to it, you know.”

Helen laughed heartily.

“Well, you shall go on saying it all your life as you learned it when young! But if you had learned it this way, you’d probably think this the best, and the present popular method very crude.”

After a minute my sister continued:—

“I think I’m right because these two corrected versions are Frank’s and were Margery’s favorites among all the nursery jingles. If you should hear the children say them a few times I think you would change your mind. But whether you did or not, the corrected form has proved more than satisfactory to my own children, and I believe would be an improvement for general use.”

My sister ceased speaking, and I thought on, this time of her courteous treatment of the children. It would have been strange

had their manners not been good. So many grown persons think it not worth while to use polite forms in addressing little ones. If Helen's dress happened to upset some structure on the floor, if she happened to run against a child in the dark, it was always, "Excuse me, darling." If at table a piece of bread was left untouched beside either child's plate, and Helen wished to take it, or if she wished to put her cutting-table just where the children were playing with their blocks, it was not her way to appropriate without first asking in her most courteous manner, "Will you care?" or "Will it trouble you if I do this?" — I never heard the children reply to this in any other than an obliging mood.

My sister now continued : —

"These habits of courteous and correct speech have no part in the solid foundations of the characters we are building. They are the external ornaments, or better, may be considered the smoothing and polishing pro-

cess of the building materials. Yet they are important in adding beauty and completeness to the work."

"We were talking a few minutes ago of lapses in good habits," said I. "When a child has acquired positively bad habits, you would of course be even more persistent?"

"Oh, yes; attack them as I would a venomous reptile trying to get lodgement in my child's heart. I have a fight before me now to persuade the children to give up their "comforts," not so much a bad habit as an undesirable one."

Helen referred here to a practice, begun by each child in babyhood, of holding something soft to the nose. Margery and Frank still clung to the remnants of the chuddahs which had been wrapped about them when infants; Margery used hers only when going to sleep, Frank relied on his besides in times of pain or grief. Some care was needed to keep clean pieces always on hand, and if by

any chance these were missing at bedtime the whole household was often called upon to join in the search for the lost treasures. On the other hand, however serious the grievance or the hurt, a piece of his old shawl never failed to comfort little Frank. So the practice had its useful side.

“If he did not at the same time put his fingers in his mouth I should be less anxious about the matter,” said Helen. “I feel that the time is approaching when the children must face the habit and conquer it, but until we can give our whole attention to it I should be sorry for them to think much about it. If they persist in a habit after it has been presented to them as unadvisable, their character is weakened. I am arming myself now in anticipation of a hard battle in which we must soon engage.”

After all Helen did not choose the time for this attack on the “comforts.” We often laughed over it afterwards, that Edward should have charged the field and carried off the banners of victory.

One evening, when he happened to look into the nursery and found the children settling down for the night with their respective pieces held to their noses, he exclaimed : —

“How long are you children going to keep that up? Look here, Margery, if you will go a week without that miserable rag, I’ll give you a bright new ten-cent piece just out of the mint.”

“When, papa?”

“Next Monday, a week from to-day.”

“Take it, then, papa; here it is.”

“Me too, papa?” asked Frank.

“Certainly, you too.”

After he had gone out with the captured pieces Margery said, —

“But I don’t know how to go to sleep without it, mamma.”

“Take long breaths slowly with your eyes shut, and you’ll soon be asleep.”

I went out of the room, and Helen extinguished the light. In another minute

Margery was unconscious, but for little Frank the conflict was harder. Helen soon came out of the room, saying: "You go down and tell Edward I shall stay till Frank gets to sleep."

She told me afterwards how she sat beside his bed holding the empty hand.

"He tossed about and cried until I took him up and rocked him to sleep, but when I laid him down his little hand went fluttering about, hunting for the comfort."

Margery had no trouble in renouncing her habit, but Frank had two to conquer and a younger character than his sister's. His second night was as hard as the first, and he said: —

"Mamma, I don't want any shiny ten-cent piece. I want my dear little comfort."

"Let us wait a while first," said his mother. "I will rock you again and hold the little lonesome fingers. I'll help you all I can, and I want you to be very, very brave."

The third night was easier, and when the

week was up, papa could give the promised piece of money to each child.

“Now, you know, I don’t believe in rocking the children every night, nor in staying with them till they go to sleep,” said Helen afterwards, referring to these evenings. “Special times call for special actions. If a child has a battle of any kind to fight, make it as easy for him as you can with consistency. We may need to centre all the forces for the time being at the point of attack, but after the victory the regular rank and file can be maintained again. The mother’s laws must not be so inflexible that love cannot bend them. There must be occasional exceptions to rules in families as in text-books. Children cannot be brought up by line and plummet, but they can be trained as a vine in any direction. I often pity babies nowadays. There are mothers who bring them up so rigidly by theory that the rules would not be broken if the sky should fall.”

“Young mothers, are n’t they, Helen?”

“Yes, and generally with but one child. Unfortunately, in these times the only child is not uncommon. A mother must have more than one to correct the mistakes she makes with the first. Of course we should guard against making undesirable habits for the children by allowing customarily, when they are little, what is not to be continued later on; and yet, what I want specially to say is, that there are occasions when the rules must be disregarded. Edward was even more set against walking with a baby than I, and yet, when Margery at ten months had a bad fall, he walked with her half the night. Once does not make a habit, nor twice. Now I believe in bringing up children to go to sleep in the dark, and Margery was well started in that direction. Indeed, as a baby she would fuss till the light was extinguished. But when she was three in some way she became accustomed to a light (I cannot recall how this origi-

nated) and seemed afraid to be left in the dark."

"Did you stay with her?"

"No, at least only a few times. She was positively terrified when alone in the dark. I concluded that she must have heard something to frighten her, but I could not learn what, and I decided to yield the point. Without further words with her I left the light in the next room turned low till she had gone to sleep, and I followed the plan a whole winter. I must say it troubled me, and I was glad when the summer made it possible for her to go to sleep without a light. But the next winter she did not ask for one, and so the matter ended."

## CHAPTER X

### WORK AND PAY

"You must be glad, Helen, that the children have given up using their "comforts," I said a short time after this.

"Yes; but without Ned's timely assistance we should probably have had a harder struggle, for I should not have offered them a reward; from me that would have seemed like a bribe for doing right. But Edward occupies himself so little with the moral training of the children that I fancy it had quite a different aspect coming from him. It was a hard sacrifice for them anyway to give up their comforts, and the offer of the shiny new piece did not appear so much like money as a medal of honor. Anyhow it was their father who chose that method, and I do not question its advisabil-

ity. Indeed, I am glad the fight was made easier for them, they are so little !”

I realized here that, although Edward's ideals might not be so lofty as my sister's, he had an equal right with her to the management of the children, even if he might not always care to exercise it; and for the first time I comprehended the patience and forbearance that must exist in a happy married life.

“If I had children,” said I aloud, “I should feel like a tiger, I know. I could not suffer that the father himself should meddle with my plans for them.”

Helen looked across at me with a sweet seriousness in her brown eyes. “Some fathers must be trials,” she said. “Now Edward and I are quite unlike, but for that very reason he can help me more with the children, who, I should not forget, partake of his nature as well as of mine. Then I am inclined to be unpractical, and he clips my wings with his prosaic common

sense. I would have my children as good and pure as the angels, but Edward reminds me that they must be fitted to go through this world also. We must live in the conditions which are actually about us. The husbands we choose to marry, it would be absurd to object to as the fathers of our children. The father is needed as well as the mother to make up the proper home influences. I have never for an instant regretted that I married Edward. I cannot imagine any other man as my husband, and I could not wish for a more congenial father for my children. I hope he has not regretted that he married me ! ”

“Helen, how ridiculous ! ”

She smiled.

“I think if you were married, and to the right man, you would feel as I do about this. In any case it is not good for us to travel by too smooth a road, and if our husbands should put obstacles in our way, we need be none the worse for them ; and it

may be, although we may not see it, our children are all the better when we cannot follow all our pet theories in their education."

After this I fell a-musing, and presently, retracing the succession of thoughts by which we had come from the conquering of a habit to the discussion of husbands and fathers, I asked : —

"Do you believe in rewards at all?"

"No, I don't believe I do, generally. Something that has no intrinsic value may sometimes have an influence with children to encourage them in doing right. A reward card expresses, I think, the teacher's approbation, and if given as such might be a help in the right direction. Still, I think it would be better, if given at all, that it should come unexpectedly. I believe in pay, though."

"Pay?"

"Yes, pay for work done with the understanding that a price is to be given for it. I let the children have opportunities to earn

money, and I sometimes wish they never received money they did not earn. They would then understand better its true meaning and its real value. It would be a mistake, however, to put too big a price on their labor, as now at least they are at an age when they ought to appreciate the value of cents. Margery sometimes earns a little money taking the silver off the table to be washed, or pulling out basting threads, or picking up after a dressmaker; Frank gets a cent for sweeping the veranda, and I wish you would notice how thoroughly he does it. He can also clean up the yard very nicely. He is quite sharp and anxious to earn. Sometimes of late he has said, 'How much will you pay me?' when I have asked him to go downstairs for something. But it did n't take many words to teach him that some things he must do without expectation of pay, also that sometimes he can be paid for doing the same thing that another time he must do as a favor.

“Work suited to the individual brings such pleasure with it that I hope both children will find this out early and appreciate work itself, independent of its financial value. One day Frank busied himself a whole forenoon raking leaves. He had a delightful time, and I often looked out at him to smile at his earnestness. When he came in, tired and dusty, I asked, ‘Did you have a good time working?’ and he answered, ‘Dat was n’t work, dat was play.’ I carried him over to the window and pointed to the lawn. ‘Play did n’t clean the lawn like that.’ Then I showed him the pile of leaves, and said, ‘Play did n’t get all those leaves together.’ He looked up into my face, puzzled. ‘But it was play, mamma,’ he said. ‘I’ll tell you something,’ said I. ‘Work that we like is better than play.’ I do hope that the little lad will early learn the truth of that statement.

“One can also do much at this tender period of a child’s life to teach the impor-

tance of work. Being paid for it helps, but is n't all. I sympathize with the old adage, 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,' but the portion of work that seems to the parent desirable for the child should be made to seem far more weighty than any pastime. This can be done better — don't you think so? — by teaching him to feel the *duty* contained in his work, which makes it necessary for him to finish it before he goes to his play. If he does this he makes a good step toward a well-rounded, honorable character.

“When I am out of change I sometimes ask the children to lend me money. That gives them great pleasure. To prevent my forgetting to repay them I give them on each occasion of this kind a promise to pay written in simple language, and when I return their money they give me the paper back. This may teach them to be careful in money obligations, as they see the pains I take to make no mistakes.”

My sister's ideas seemed sensible to me, but I had not previously given much thought to this subject. Another aspect of the money question came up later.

One day my brother-in-law borrowed a quarter from Margery, and in the evening returned it with an additional cent. "There's a cent for interest," he explained. "I give you one more than you gave me." She took it, well pleased, and ran up to put it in her bank. She had scarcely left the room when Helen took up the Bible. Turning the leaves she soon found what she wanted, and said to Edward:—

"I wish to call your attention to this. Read there."

He took the book and read aloud:—

"Deuteronomy xxiii. 19: 'Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother. . . . Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury.'"

Then he read it again, and the puzzled look left his brow.

“By which you wish to indicate your disapproval of the extra cent to Margery?”

“Most certainly.”

“Well, I guess you’re in the right.”

“Oh, I am, Edward,” she said. “I know I am. It can’t be right to teach a child to receive such profit from a father.”

“Well, I won’t do it again.”

Margery might have forgotten all about it if it had not happened that the very next day her mother wished to borrow a dime from her.

“When you pay me back, are you going to give me more?” she asked.

Her mother said, —

“Why, no. That is paying you for lending me the money. Do you want pay for a kindness?”

“Oh, no, mamma,” she answered sweetly, “but papa paid me more.”

“That was kind in papa,” said her mother;

“but I should n’t think you would wish him to pay you for letting him take the money. That’s what the big banks in the city do, and it’s all right for you to get it from them, but it is n’t nice in our own family to take interest.”

That evening Margery said to her mother, “I should like to give papa back that cent, but I put it in the starch-box bank.”

“You can give him the next one you get,” said Helen, looking pleased.

Margery earned one the following day, and gave it to her father with so much dignity that I was sorry Helen was not by to see. Edward grasped the situation at once and put the money in his vest-pocket.

“I didn’t know,” said he to Margery, “that my little daughter was such a business lady.”

That evening he held the cent out to Helen, saying:—

“Do you know what that is?”

“It looks like a common brown cent.”

“ Well, it is n’t. It’s pure gold, and I’m going to keep it always for luck. My daughter gave it to me.”

“ Oh — Oh ! ” said Helen, nodding.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE CHILD'S HAPPINESS

I HAD been watching Edward. He was invariably polite to all and kind and attentive to the children; but he seemed to me a little heavy. I thought this might be attributed to the warm weather, but wondered if that were the only cause. One evening some of the neighbors came in, and it being quite chilly out of doors, we stayed in the house and played whist. As the evening advanced, Edward became more and more entertaining. I was surprised at his brilliancy in repartee and the spontaneous heartiness of his laugh. Helen in a more quiet way seemed to enjoy the evening too. Even at breakfast the next morning my brother-in-law looked brighter and happier than

usual and left us all laughing when he went off to his train.

“Do you go out much in the winter?”  
I asked my sister.

“Oh, no, very little since the children came. We are steady stay-at-homes and find our pleasure by our own fireside.”

“But surely the children don't need you evenings?”

“Well, no, not now; but last winter they had the whooping-cough, and I would often need to run up to them in the evening.”

“Does Edward like this quiet life?”

“He does n't seem to object to it,” said Helen, smiling. “There's a club here, but he does n't care to join it; says he prefers to spend his evenings with me.”

“Well, far be it from me to criticise, but I noticed how thoroughly he seemed to enjoy last evening, and I wondered if he went out as much as he would like.”

“Why, he does n't seem unhappy, does he?”

“No, — oh no, — not unhappy, only quiet.”

“Well, perhaps we can go out more this coming winter. I really suppose we ought to. When the children were babies I told Ned that I felt my first duty to be with them, and he agreed with me. Now that they are older, perhaps I can give more attention to him without neglecting them.”

“Do, Helen.”

“Why, you funny creature! I shall have to tell him what a champion he has in you. I am sure he does not seem to me so badly treated! Anyway, there is n’t much chance to do anything this weather but keep cool, and I am glad the matter must be deferred. I’m getting lazy about social duties.”

One evening as we sat at tea, not long after this, a neighbor came in and proposed our joining an electric-car party that was to leave about seven. Edward was quite in the mood for it, so Helen proposed that I should go with him.

"You go, Helen, and I will stay with the children," said I.

"The children!" echoed Edward impatiently. "Let Mary put them to bed. Come, wife, go and put your duds on."

Helen looked at me for a moment, then rose, saying, "Come, let's get ready."

As we went upstairs I assured her that my head was aching too badly for me to enjoy the breeze, and that I should prefer to stay quietly at home. "I'll see the children to bed, and then go myself," said I. "I'm delighted that you are going."

We were neither of us prepared for the opposition of the nursery. Margery threw her arms about her mother, crying, "Oh, mamma, don't leave us!" and Frank cried with tears streaming down his face, "Oh, mamma, don't go away."

"I never heard of anything so ridiculous in my life," said Helen, laughing into their wet faces. "You silly children, I'm only going out for a while, and auntie will be

here with you. This is nonsense, and I have no time to stop and talk about it. Here's a kiss for you both, and away I must go ; I'll come and kiss you when I come back."

She had shut the door, but Frank screamed, —

"Mamma, mamma !"

She put in her head.

"Quick, what is it ? I have n't a moment."

"I shall need you, mamma. What shall I do if I need you ?"

"I must go now, Frank ; auntie is here and you can call her if you need anything. Good-by."

Helen was gone. Frank cried a little, then was diverted. The next day Helen told the children that she hoped they would behave better another time.

"Now that you are getting older, I can leave you more often, and when I do I want you to be brave about it. Some mothers slip away from their children and don't tell them they are going. Would you like me to do that ?"

“ Oh no, mamma.”

“ Then you must be good when I go. I don't go because I want to leave you, but because it's right for me to go. I must do the right thing, and you must do the right thing.”

“ This is my training time,” said Helen to me, referring to this episode, “ and evening is the best time to influence the tender minds of children. I shall not lightly give up their bedtime minutes, but it is not necessary to have them every night. I want the children to have a happy childhood, but I do not wish it to be a selfish one. Their happiness should neither be, nor seem to the children to be, our highest aim. Children, like almost all young in nature, should be petted by the mother and allowed to play care-free; but in the human being the period of immaturity is long, and I think should be largely one of preparation. The character of the whole after-life is affected by this early training. The pursuit of duty, of honor, and all right

conduct should be placed far ahead of personal happiness. Indeed, we know by our own experience that the happiness we strive for fails to please us when attained, and we should not teach our children to strive for it. But we can help them to acquire a happy disposition, and in this, as in many other things, we should begin early. Even in infancy the mother's smile and caress can influence her child. In its first disappointments, while giving full sympathy, she can encourage a hopeful spirit. If she is cheerful, her child will naturally become so. Her depressed moments she should conquer or conceal for her children's sake. .

“She should not fetter him with the fears and superstitions she has herself. I know a mother who is quite overcome with terror in thunderstorms, but her children have no idea of it. At such times she shuts herself away from them, and they play undisturbed during a storm, or watch it fearlessly from the window. Although it seems

natural to fear the vivid flashes of the lightning and the terrible voice of the thunder (you know how restless birds and dogs are at such times), yet it often happens that children are not frightened unless they have been taught this fear; or if they are at first afraid, are easily persuaded to the contrary if older people about them remain calm.

“One way of giving children a bent towards happiness is to direct them to the beautiful. We can early inculcate in them a love of nature. We can teach them to see the beauty in flowers, plants, birds, the grass even, and the sky. We need not wait for them to find this out for themselves. Perhaps unaided they would never learn it. It is not the material possessions we give our children that insure their happiness. Without the contented mind, all the wealth in the world would not make a man happy; with it, even in poverty he is not entirely miserable.”

“Yes, Helen,” said I, “his poverty can-

not deprive him of the sky, even if he may have but a small piece of it, and often he can have trees as well to look at! I remember reading somewhere that the pleasure derived in observing nature outlasts in old age every other. If that is true, your system would ensure an endowment of happiness for all time."

"Yes, and with good security."

"I have noticed Frank's love for flowers. I wonder whether he would have had it had you not so influenced him."

"I don't know. With him and with Margery I began early. I remember the first time Margery walked out with me over the grass in the spring. I showed her the tiny green blades starting up, and, pointing to the deep blue sky, said, 'Pretty, pretty.' I think Frank, however, has more love for nature than she. He at least more often calls my attention to the flowers and sunsets."

"She may be more reticent," said I, "but

as a teacher I have noticed that boys are generally more observing than girls."

"Some children are by nature happier than others. A child needs an atmosphere of love and sympathy. Assured of these, it matters little what we are able to give to him or to do for him. Better too few, rather than too many possessions. Self-reliance, independence, and originality are to be encouraged. Well-merited praise should not be withheld, but in this we need not foster vanity and conceit. While the child must feel sure of the parents' care and protection, he should not be overmuch meddled with."

"And yet it is really hard not to help him," I put in.

"Yes, we see him struggling over some piece of work which we could do so easily. We long to take it from him, but second and wiser thoughts restrain us. Often the child himself is displeased if we make the mistake of doing the work for him. He prefers to do it unaided. We must have

patience to wait for him. Neither must we mark out a fixed path for his little feet. With suitable food for his mind and body, and suitable opportunities for exercising his muscles and faculties, we must let him browse about a good deal and nibble here and there somewhat at his own will. Often children in their investigations will go further than their mothers can really enjoy to witness, much less sympathize with. It would often be wrong, however, to restrain them. We must let them climb higher than we like to see; we must let them face other dangers. We cannot, even if we would, eliminate dangers from their life; often to lessen the exposure is not only useless but productive of more perils. One must guard a baby from fire and light, but after a few years he is bound to experiment with matches. Better let him light some occasionally in the presence of the mother and forbid his touching them away from her, than prohibit his handling them altogether. This course will sat-

isfy a reasonable child, while the contrary tempts him to slyness, the possible result of which in the matter of matches is horrible to consider."

"I have wondered to see you let Margery use the sewing-machine. Is this your reason?"

"Yes, the child is fascinated with tools and machinery. I should not dare to absolutely forbid her ever touching my machine. As it is she is satisfied with turning the wheel in my presence, and never goes to it when I am not by. I have explained the danger there is in using it carelessly, but if I should forbid her having anything to do with it I should throw a big temptation into her path, which might be too great for her, and if in ignorance she went to it when alone, she might be seriously injured when I was not by to protect her. Perhaps you think my theories about children somewhat peculiar?"

"Some of them are new to me, Helen, but on the whole I believe you are right. I

think with you that children develop better when not too constantly guided and directed if they have any originality and imagination, and I also think it is foolish to make the world bend to their caprices."

"But," said my sister, "although I would not wish the children to feel that I placed their present happiness above all other considerations, yet I do believe in providing for them special extraordinary pleasures, to be scattered, not too frequently, here and there through their life as opportunity offers, the thought of which will be prominent in their future recollections."

"Do you remember, Helen, that time mother woke us up in the middle of the night to take us to a fire?"

"Yes, indeed. How often I have recalled it! The surprise that we should be allowed to go added much to our enjoyment of the grand spectacle. Then you remember the day father took us out fishing in a sailboat?"

"Yes, and you pulled in the biggest fish?"

"Yes, and it did n't seem quite right to call it mine when I couldn't haul him in unaided."

We laughed.

"Do you remember," asked Helen, "the night we went in to see the fireworks on Boston Common?"

"Yes; and do you remember the rides up in the country under the sleigh-robe?"

"Yes; and those summers at grandpa's?"

"And the party we had?"

"We had plenty of good times, and I am sure your childhood must seem a happy one. Mine was, and yet we were left largely to ourselves, and I know it was a time of rigid economy with mother and of real anxiety at times as to the expense account. We did not have many gifts (think of those the modern child receives!), but we can recall nearly every one we ever received, each meant so much to us."

“I don’t see, Helen, how it would ever be possible to repeat for the modern child those ideal days of simple, wholesome life.”

“No, we can give him summers at the seashore, but even there, alas! unless we are fortunate in selection, ultra-civilization crowds its claims upon him. We may be able to shield our own to some extent from outside influences, yet children are affected, must be, by the superabundance of modern life, and may feel that they are deprived of legitimate conditions if we restrict their possessions. On the other hand, the luxury of modern existence is in some respects of benefit to them: in so far as it furnishes more *tools*, the field of a child’s activities is wider, more useful, and hence happier.

“The multiplicity of toys is an evil. I feel sometimes like founding a settlement where children could be brought up simply. Our life of the present day is too complex.”

“But I don’t see how you can largely affect the conditions surrounding your chil-

dren unless you keep your family secluded, and you would n't think that wise?"

"No, I am only uttering a protest. My aim must be to do the best I can under the existing conditions. Now, I would gladly keep Margery and Frank always at home in playtime. I should feel safer about them, but I foresee that as they grow older, if I wish them to have companions, this will not always be right. My duty is not alone to my own children. To keep them happy when at home, and to make their playmates happy here with them, I may furnish the means of occupations, but I should never try to influence other children to find any place happier than their own homes. Other mothers have rights too."

"But all mothers do not equally appreciate them," said I.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CHILD'S THOUGHT OF DEATH

MY sister's method of treating the subject of death had especially impressed me in the beginning of my visit.

Shortly after I arrived, Margery was standing by the window one day playing with some photographs.

"Who is this, mamma?" she asked.

"That is a picture of my mother, your grandmother."

"I don't know her, do I? Where is she now?"

"Up in God's home, Margery."

"How did she get there?"

"God took her. I don't know just how."

"Does she like it there?"

"Oh, yes. She could n't help liking it."

It's a lovely place, where no one is ever sick or troubled, and no one ever cries."

"Is n't she coming here any more?"

"No."

"Why?"

"None of the people ever do that go there."

"Who else is there?"

"A great many, many people; and some day we shall go there too."

"Go together?"

"I don't know. We don't need to worry about that. God will take us when the time comes for us to go. He knows all about it."

"I should n't like to go without you, mamma."

"No, I don't suppose you would, dear. Many people don't go till they are very old. When they grow old, God takes them to His home and gives them a new body that can't grow old. Sometimes He takes people when they are very sick. The time that God

wants us to go is just the best time for us."

Margery took up another card. "Who is this?"

"That is a lady named Mrs. Williams."

"Is she up in God's home?"

"No, she is in New York."

Thus the conversation was turned into another direction.

One day we were all out riding and passed a cemetery.

"Mamma, what are all those white things?" said Margery.

Helen did not at once answer. I wondered what her reply would be, for I knew her desire was to keep Margery from getting an unhappy idea of death.

Margery repeated her question.

"Those — those are the stones on which are written the names of the persons up in God's home."

"Oh, yes. How many there are!" said Margery.

About this time I had a little talk of my own with Helen upon this subject.

"You can't keep Margery always from hearing remarks about death," said I.

"Oh, no. But what I wish is to give her first a thought of it different from the common one, and avoid the repulsive aspect altogether, if possible."

Then Helen continued: —

"Do you remember the funeral of old Mr. Jones? Why, we must have been quite small at the time, but the thought of his being buried gave me a shock which I did not get over for years. I wish to avoid such an experience for Margery."

"Well, I certainly agree with you, Helen, if you can do it. But other children will enlighten yours before long."

"I know that," said my sister. "I must get ahead of them. Why, just the other day I heard a little boy telling his sister that somebody had been put in a box in the ground. How dreadful!"

After this I watched with interest my sister's training of the new thought in little Margery's mind. In the neighborhood was a lady in the last stage of consumption. I several times heard Helen speak of her in the following way to her little daughter: —

“No, she's no better, Margery. She'll be glad to go up to God's home some day, won't she? I think He will take her before long.”

When the end occurred, Helen cautioned us all not to mention the word death in connection with Mrs. Blake. Margery came to me with the remark: —

“Is n't it lovely, auntie, that Mrs. Blake has gone up to God's home? She won't cough any more, mamma says. I wish I had seen her go.”

Things developed rather faster than Helen expected, but, after all, in a natural sequence. Margery heard us speaking of the funeral, and inquired about it. She knew we were going.

“ Well, you see, Margery, the minister will come and talk to Mrs. Blake’s family and any friends who are there. He will tell them not to feel badly when they miss her, for she won’t be sick any more where she has gone. He will tell them about God’s home, what a lovely place it is, and that after a while they can all go there too and see her again.”

“ May I go to the funeral with you, mamma ? ”

“ No, I think you would better stay at home.”

Later Margery saw the carriages.  
“ Where were they all going, mamma ? ”

“ They were going to the place where they will some day put a stone with her name on it.”

“ Oh, yes. I ’member those stones. What was that long, funny carriage, mamma ? ”

Evidently Helen had not expected this, and she gave me a twinkling glance before she replied : —

“That, my dear, was the carriage in which they put Mrs. Blake’s old body that she was all through with. She won’t want it any more. She will have a nice new body, you know.”

“What will they do with the old body?”

“Oh, they’ll just put it down in the ground. It’s of no use now, you know.”

Helen’s voice trembled. Here was the test of her theories. Would Margery be shocked? Far from it. She asked calmly, “Where will they put it? In the garden?”

“No, some people do put the old bodies in the gardens; but Mrs. Blake’s old body will be put in the place where they will have the stone put with her name on it.”

“Oh, yes.”

Later we heard Margery telling her little brother about this. “Only the heads go up, Frankie. The old bodies are planted in the ground, and God fastens a new body on the heads when they get up to His country.”

Helen called the children to her and asked, —

"What part of you is it that loves mamma?"

"Our eyes," said the little boy.

"No; shut your eyes. You love me now. What is it that loves me?"

"Yight here," said Frank. His hand was over his stomach.

"Well, let's put it another way. Shut your eyes again, and tell me if you remember the day when auntie came."

"Yes."

"You're thinking about it, are you? You're thinking how she looked when she came up the steps? Now, what is it that is thinking? Is it your hands? Your feet?"

"No."

"Your heads?"

"Is it, mamma?" asked Margery.

"We use the head to think with, but the thinking is not the head. The thinking and loving part of us lives inside our bodies until God takes it out of the old body and gives it a new one. That thinking and loving

part is really what we are. Our bodies are only a covering to it. When I think of Margery, I mean the thinking and loving part that lives in Margery's body. Can you understand this, my little girl? Frankie is yet too young."

"I know what you mean, mamma. When I think of you at night I think of the kind part that lives inside. But it seems to me, mamma, it looks out of your eyes."

"May be it does look out of the eyes, Margery; but the eyes are not a part of it. The head belongs to the body and does not go up to God's home. That is what I wanted to tell you. Now run off and play."

One thing was wanting to make the child's lesson a finished one. As yet she did not associate the word "death" with the passing of the soul.

Not long after this we were much startled by the sudden departure of a prominent neighbor. This item of news was in every one's mouth and it was not strange that some

of the remarks reached Margery. Without comprehending her own words, she came to us in great excitement, exclaiming : —

“ Just think, mamma ! Mr. Storrs is dead in his bed ! Just think, auntie ! He’s dead in his bed ! ”

Helen shut her lips firmly for an instant, and I could easily believe she was uttering a mental anathema against servants and gossips in general. Her reply was ready, however. Putting her hand on Margery’s head to calm her, she said quietly, —

“ That’s only his old body, dear. When people speak of any one as dying, they always mean the old body. Mr. Storrs is not dead.”

“ Has he gone to God’s home ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ He was n’t sick, was he, mamma ? I saw him yesterday.”

“ No, he wasn’t sick, and no one knew God was going to take him. It was a surprise.”

“ Oh, dear ! I ’m sorry he ’s gone away. He can’t take me to ride any more, can he ? I ’most feel like crying, mamma.”

“ You may cry, dear. I cried too when I heard about it. But I will tell you something that will make you feel happier. A good many years ago Mr. Storrs had two little boys, but God thought it would be better for them to be up in His home, so He took them. Mr. Storrs has felt very badly about it, for, you see, he missed them all these years very much indeed, and they were all the children he had. Now you can just guess how happy he must be to see them again.”

After Margery had left the room, Helen exclaimed : —

“ There ! That ’s over with, and I ’m thankful. She has heard it all now, and I ’m positively sure she can never have the horror of death that haunted me as a child.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE CHILD'S RELIGION

“WHEN Margery was about two,” said Helen, “I taught her to say a little prayer, and had her repeat it every night on going to bed. ‘God bless Margery,’ — that was all at first; but I showed her how to kneel, and she understood that the prayer was always to come before lying down for the night. Of course the name God meant nothing to her, and the three words together nothing at all. My only idea was to have her begin to pray so early that it would be second nature to her to say her evening prayer, and indeed that she should not be able to recall a time when she did not say it. As she grew older I suggested, ‘God bless papa. God bless mamma. God bless Frank. God bless Margery,’ and this was the form for

some time, but was altered to admit others from time to time, and often stretches out now into a long list of friends and relatives.

“Not for a long time did I try to teach her anything about God; but it was probably in answer to some questions of hers that I explained, when she was old enough to be interested, that God loves us, that He is the Father of all the people in the world, that He wants every one to do what is right, that He sees everything that happens, that He is glad when we do right and sorry when we do wrong, and that He has a home where He takes His children when they are through with this world.

“Of course in his turn Frank was taught to pray, and of course he has heard much of what I have told Margery at an earlier age than she heard it. As I think about them and their relation towards God, I know that what I want for them is, to have God in their lives, to lean upon Him now, that they

may depend upon Him all through life, and look to Him at all times for help in trouble, or in gratitude for whatever good comes to them. I should not wish to live myself without God, which would leave me indeed without hope in the world, and I want my children to grow up into this same dependence upon Him."

While Helen had always when young been a little shy in talking about religious matters, she now showed no trace of this feeling. I not infrequently heard her say when the children were near: "I thank God for this beautiful day." — "I thank God for this lovely rain." — "I thank God that papa is all right again." — "I thank God that He sent you to me, my darling child." — "I thank God that no bones were broken in that fall." I told Helen one day that she reminded me of the "Lord save us" of some of our humbler fellow Christians!

"I think I learned it from them," she answered, a twinkle rippling over her face.

“I say it in my heart every time my feet are kept from falling, but I say it aloud when the children are near that they may know my dependence upon God.

“It is so easy and natural for a child to believe in God’s love and to feel His existence. Children drink in the beauty and happiness that come from the knowledge of heavenly things and call for more. It is perhaps the very mystery of God’s nature that makes the subject so fascinating.

“Although I had not intended to do more than direct their thoughts Godward, they would ply me with questions about Him night after night. Now Margery had been repeating a prayer for a good many months before she realized the privileges of prayer. One night she said to me as I tucked her up for the night, ‘Mamma, what do people do when they want things?’ Not quite understanding her I yet answered, ‘If it is something to buy, and they have money and know it is all right to buy it, why, they go

and get it.' 'But if it is n't to buy with money, and they don't know how to get it?' 'I'll tell you what I do, Margery, I ask God to let me have it if it is good for me, but that I don't want it if it is n't.' 'How do you ask Him?' 'I say, "O God, if it is best, help me to get this thing, and don't let me have it if it is n't good for me." ' 'Oh, yes, now I know. If I whisper it, can He hear?' 'Yes, indeed, or if you just think it, He will know all about it.' She told me afterwards what it was she wanted, and that she had asked for it.

"When little Frank comprehended that Margery was asking for specific things, he too began to think of requests. As his great desire was to be strong, this was his first voluntary petition, 'Make me strong.' Later he added, 'Make me kind,' and another night, 'Make me grow up a good man.' One night as the little fellow lay in bed, his eyes wide open with thought, he said to me, 'Mamma, God is good, and I love Him, and

I'm going to put Him in my prayer.' Then, after a list of persons whom he wished God to bless, he ended with 'God bless me. God bless God, Amen. Make me grow up strong and a good man.' As I thought over the tender feeling that led to his praying thus, I did not venture to meddle with it, and he still uses the same petition every night. Some day I will explain the words to him, and he will understand things better. Margery's original supplication ends with, 'And make me grow up kind, and make me grow up to a good lady and a good cook.'

"One night I heard Margery say, 'Mine was a bigger prayer than yours, Frank.' 'Oh,' said I, 'that does n't matter. Sometimes you will say a long prayer and sometimes a short one. Never ask for anything more than you want, for God can look right into your heart and He knows what you really wish to ask Him. He does n't care whether it's a long prayer or a short one. Sometimes you will be too tired to make a

long prayer, but I hope you will never want to go to sleep without sending up some prayer to Him.'

"One evening I was late in getting to the children, and Frank seemed to be asleep. As I kissed him he stirred and sleepily murmured, 'Good-night.' 'Too tired to say your prayer?' 'Ye-es;,' then rousing, he said, 'No, I'm 'fwaid God 'ould miss it.'

"It might have been about this time that Margery asked me if it was necessary to kneel when praying. 'No, dear,' I replied. 'If you were not well it would be quite proper for you to say your prayer in bed, and God would listen to it just as surely. Often when I am out walking I send little thoughts up to Him as I go along. In some churches the people kneel when praying, in others they bow their heads or cover their eyes. Still it seems to me better in the regular prayer at night, or in the morning, to kneel. I don't know that we need to, but I like to. I always kneel when I say my night prayer.'

This had its influence with Margery, for since then, no matter how sleepy she is, she always insists upon kneeling.

“As to Sunday, I have been satisfied in making a difference between that day and the others. From their earliest playdays we have called the stone blocks ‘Sunday blocks,’ and certain toys we leave untouched on that day, as for instance the trains. I give free expression to my own love for my church and let the children go with me as a great privilege, Margery generally and Frank once in a while.

“Fearing to confuse their minds, I have only recently told them about Jesus ; but they love to hear about Him, about the dear little baby born in the stable, the perfect boy, the perfect man, the stories Jesus told, the kind things He did, the lessons He taught the people ; just a little about His death, His position in Heaven and His interest in us all. Many of the parables are

just suited to little children and just long enough for them. Dear me! I believe you have gone to sleep under my sermon!"

"Far from it, Helen. It is n't a sermon about children that sends me to sleep."

## CHAPTER XIV

### A FINAL TALK WITH HELEN

“Do you realize, Helen,” said I one afternoon, after we had settled again to our sewing, “that in another fortnight I ought to be back in my school?”

“I don’t like to think of it,” my sister was good enough to say.

“I shall be sorry to leave you, Helen, but I actually burn to put into practice the many things I have been learning here. Above all, I’m going to love those children in my school. You need n’t think you mothers have all the good work to do. I’m going to be a secondary mother, and in the case of the stupid and naughty children, who of course are always the most uninteresting to the teacher, I’m going to look for what

their mothers find in them. Who can tell how much good I may do?"

"Who, indeed?" said Helen.

"But how I shall miss Margery and Frank! Do you know, I think the principal charm of that little girl of yours is her unaffectedness. When we were in the electric car the other day, I particularly noticed how wanting in self-consciousness she is. She was telling me about something she had seen, and although she was not a bit noisy, all in the car who could see her seemed listening to her little story. It was so pretty! Her little hands went fluttering about and her eyes sparkled, but she was quite unaware of the attention she attracted. I felt proud of the child. How have you managed, with all her attractiveness and originality, to keep her so unconscious?"

"By being constantly on the watch to shield her from unwise flattery," said my sister. "I began when she was first learning to talk. When I found it necessary, I

always asked those who listened to her quaint remarks to refrain from smiling or showing surprise, and of course I specially forbade any reference to her prettiness. It was our custom in the family, when we ourselves could hardly keep from spoiling our dainty baby-girl by indiscreet praise, to say, 'Does n't she look *clean*?' We let that harmless adjective express all the superlative words we wanted to utter.

"You know too that I do not repeat the children's sayings or talk about them when they can overhear me. Neither do I ask them to be good for appearance' sake, no matter what the temptation is with visitors present on a naughty day. Why should I use as a motive, 'What will this person think of you,' when I want their conduct built on the foundation of God's law?

"Children are often made to feel themselves of too much importance, and that makes them self-conscious and vain. This is a great pity, for it is so far from the true

state of things. Their lives are mere atoms in the world's history. There is much in this big planet for them to consider without being too much occupied with their own tiny selves."

"I don't wonder children feel important," said I. "In how many homes everything is done according to the children's whims!"

"Yes," said Helen, "their little worlds must often seem to revolve about them, and it is not surprising that they see things out of focus. When a child conquers a weakness or a sin, it is right that he should be encouraged, but we ought not to praise natural ability or inherent traits. This but makes him feel unduly important. What has he that he has not received? Why should he glory in it?"

"My dear, my dear," said I, "you are giving me many ideas. Of this imprudence at least I have been guilty in the schoolroom. I will be wiser in the future."

"I should think," said Helen, "that the

children of the third grade might be already pretty well influenced by lower motives before they get to you."

"Yes, and it is n't often the teacher's fault. The children influence one another, laugh at originalities, and criticise parents and teachers."

"For that reason I hesitate to send Margery to the only school there is here. I should think you could do little for public school children unless you take them at the start. But in any case you lose them at the end of a year, and where is your influence?"

"I might take a primary school and then specially request each year to be promoted with my children till they get to an age where another teacher would be desirable."

"Yes," said my sister. "If you could do that I should think your work would be more encouraging."

With food for abundant thought we stitched on for some time in silence.

"Helen," said I suddenly, "what do you wish the children to be?"

“ I don’t know. I do not consciously shape any desire as to their future work. I should be glad to know Margery were to be spared the need of earning her bread; but when she grows older and I can better judge of her capabilities, I intend to prepare her for some honorable work for which she may seem suited. With all the world of activities open to a boy, I should find it hard to choose Frank’s life-work, if indeed I dared to do so. We shall not bias him, but wait for his own instincts to point out his opportunity. All I can now see my way to do is to lay the foundation of a good character and a thorough general education. What he will build on it later, time will show.”

“ I wonder, Helen, that you do not worry about the children. You bear the care so easily. It seems to me I should be anxious about them all the time.”

“ I don’t understand you,” said my sister.  
“ Why should I worry about them ? ”

“ I was thinking particularly of that night

when Margery was so ill. The anxiety was almost too much for me, and I wondered how you, her mother, could bear it. Don't misunderstand me, Helen; I knew your love was far greater than mine; that was what mystified me. I should think the greater the love, the greater would be the anxiety."

"Yes, it is so, the greater the love, the greater the anxiety. Indeed a mother's anxiety is almost unbearable."

"But you seemed so calm, Helen. Once I felt like screaming, and just then you smiled and spoke to Margery as if you knew she was going to get well."

"Oh, no, I had no such assurance. I buried her more than once in those dreadful days."

"You buried her!"

"Yes, I faced the worst that could happen; that is the only way I can bear care and anxiety. The first time Margery was ever ill was when she was teething. She had a convulsion and I fully believed she

was dying. It seemed as if my heart stopped its beating and my lungs their breathing. For a few minutes I felt suffocated with my anxiety, but I did not entirely lose my judgment; the remedies I resorted to were speedily effectual, and that terrible anxiety was removed. But the next day and the next I was oppressed with the terrible possibilities the future held for me;—and then I faced them. Death was what I dreaded for my child; then I must face death. Suppose she should die, what then? What was death? I thought it all out, and it did not seem so terrible after all. There are things in life much worse than death, but we may not be required to face them. Death, we know, will come to us all, and we may as well familiarize our minds with it. We do not know what experiences our children must pass through; it would be impossible for us to foresee and useless to imagine them. But in the midst of life we are in death, and death must come to us all; of that we are

sure. Now if I should lose my darlings, I should probably find the reality much worse than my imaginings; yet the *fear* of their dying I have conquered, and it is surprising how much anxiety is removed if we conquer the fear of death.

“When Frank was born, I said, ‘It may be God’s will that he should not grow up; I’m going to be thankful for every day I have him.’ This is an instinctive method of protecting myself from disappointment!”

“There I see the old Helen!” I exclaimed. “You always said you preferred to expect little — do you remember? — then the pleasures that came would be surprises, and there could be no disappointments!”

“Did I? I remember feeling so years ago about expected pleasures. All might not care to use the same system, but it helps me. I feel above all that we are in God’s hand. What He permits to happen I must in any case submit to; I am happier to *choose* to submit to it.”

Later we talked of the power of the parent's influence, and my sister said, —

“One thing that sometimes lessens this is the disagreement between father and mother on subjects discussed before the children. The latter are sure to form more or less of an opinion in the matter considered and to take part with one parent against the other. I remember when as children we went to visit at Uncle John's, we would hear him and Aunt Mary discuss the food a child should eat. Aunt Mary had been brought up strictly to eat whatever was set before her. Uncle John believed all should be allowed to exercise choice in the matter. Although they were perfectly good-natured, we felt obliged to side one way or the other; and so did their children, as you must remember.”

I smiled and nodded.

“Perhaps I should not recall this, or place any particular value on it, if I had not been much impressed by something a good

man, a minister, once told me. He had lived in a wicked city on the continent and there brought up a family of boys. To an outsider the mother appeared to be a selfish woman with no high ideals. Surrounded by evil on all sides, it surprised me to see those lads grow up fair and pure as lilies in the river-mud. When I had the opportunity, I ventured to ask the father how he had managed, and this was his reply : —

“ ‘ Under God I believe we owe it to a resolution made by my wife and me on the birth of our first child. We determined then that before our children we would have no differences, even in trivial matters, that what matters demanded discussion should be considered in private. This made our word seem infallible to them.’ I never saw this good man again, but have learned that to-day those sons (I think there are five) are all ministers.

“ My dear little children ! If I can only help them on to goodness and a peaceful

life! I try to utilize this springtime of theirs, dropping in little seeds of thought which I hope will bear fruit throughout their lives. It may seem silly to you, but even when they are asleep, as I tuck them up more thoroughly for the night, I often whisper to each, 'Be good, darling, be good!' Frank says now if he could be only one thing he would rather be good than strong. God grant he may always feel so!"

It so happened that this was the last opportunity my sister and I had for a good long talk together. A few weeks later I was again in my schoolroom, and my chats with Helen but memories; yet they cling about my simple duties and beautify them. How motherly I feel, sometimes, as I look over my school-children. It is wonderful what a change this love makes in me as well as in them. As they look up from their work, they smile confidentially into my face, and I rarely see anything sly in their con-

duct. In truth, I am no longer on the watch for slyness, and if sometimes I find in my group a child with really bad instincts, how my heart goes out to him! Yes, I may as well confess it, sometimes I whisper to myself: "I will be better to him than his own mother! he is mine too!"



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